GARRY GRAYSON'S HILL STREET ELEVEN

Elmer A. Dawson

Gordon W. Vikan

Fifth Grade

Box 474

Bottineau,

N. D.

GARRY LAY TACKLED, BUT WITH THE PIGSKIN JUST OVER THE ENEMY'S GOAL LINE.

Garry Grayson's Hill Street Eleven. *Frontispiece*—(*Page* 127)

GARRY GRAYSON'S HILL STREET ELEVEN

OR

The Football Boys of Lenox

BY

ELMER A. DAWSON

AUTHOR OF "GARRY GRAYSON AT LENOX HIGH"
"GARRY GRAYSON'S FOOTBALL RIVALS"
ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

WALTER S. ROGERS

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

Made in the United States of America

GARRY GRAYSON FOOTBALL STORIES

By ELMER A. DAWSON

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

GARRY GRAYSON'S HILL STREET ELEVEN
OR THE FOOTBALL BOYS OF LENOX

GARRY GRAYSON AT LENOX HIGH
OR THE CHAMPIONS OF THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

GARRY GRAYSON'S FOOTBALL RIVALS
OR THE SECRET OF THE STOLEN SIGNALS

GARRY GRAYSON SHOWING HIS SPEED
OR A DARING RUN ON THE GRIDIRON

GARRY GRAYSON AT STANLEY PREP
OR THE FOOTBALL RIVALS OF RIVERVIEW

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

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GARRY GRAYSON'S HILL STREET ELEVEN

CHAPTER I

The Kidnaped Football

"Just watch me kick it," called Garry Grayson to two of his friends, as he launched his leg with all his force at the new football that had been given to him as a birthday present. He caught it squarely with the point of his toe and sent it whirling through the air.

Nick Danter and Ted Dillingham made a rush for the pigskin, but Nick was the quicker and just managed to get his hands on it as it came down.

"Gee, Garry, but that's a peach of a ball!" exclaimed Nick, as he looked it over.

"I'll tell the world it is," admitted Garry, his face flushed with pride. "They don't come any better. Look at the brand," and he pointed out the trade-mark of a leading sporting goods house in New York City.

"The same kind they use in the Yale and Princeton games," commented Ted, with a little touch of awe.

"Sure thing," agreed Garry. "I couldn't have got a thing for my birthday that I'd have liked half as well. Maybe we won't have fun with this, eh, fellows?"

"You said a mouthful," replied Nick. "Let's see if I can kick it as high and as far as you did."

He made the attempt, but the kick was low and the ball covered only about half the distance made by Garry.

"Bet I beat you both," challenged Ted.

In his eagerness Ted kicked too soon and missed the ball altogether. The force with which he swung at the ball whirled him around like a top. He struggled wildly to retain his balance, but fell sprawling in the dust.

Garry and Nick laughed as Ted picked himself up and ruefully brushed his clothes.

"That was a dud," he admitted, "but I'll do it all right the next time."

His second attempt was more successful, and the ball soared through the air like a bird.

"Just about a tie between you and Garry," pronounced Nick, as he noted where the ball fell.

For half an hour the three boys kicked the ball about, with varying fortunes as to distance

covered. Then they stopped for a breathing spell.

"Lots of fun in this," said Garry; "but there'd be a good deal more in a regular game."

"Right you are," agreed Nick. "It's like fungoes or one old cat in baseball, good as far as it goes. But you only get the real kick when you play the game right, have a regular team and other fellows to fight against."

"Like that game Lenox High played against Rutland High the other day," put in Ted. "Gee, but that was exciting! When Hanson made that run of forty yards for a touchdown I didn't know whether I was standing on my head or my heels."

"Same here," declared Garry. "I was so hoarse from yelling that I could hardly speak at supper time. I tell you, football's a great game."

"Bet your life!" agreed Nick emphatically. "And say, fellows, if we get so worked up at seeing a play like that of Hanson's, what must it be to make the play yourself? How do you suppose Hanson felt with his pals slapping him on the back and all the Lenox fans in the stands yelling their heads off?"

"He wouldn't have changed places with the President of the United States," surmised Garry.

"But what's the use of talking about it?"

objected Nick. "We couldn't have made the run he did."

"Neither could he when he was only as old as we are," said Garry. "He's been playing for the last three years, and he's learned the game. He started when he was in grammar school. Why can't we do the same?" he added eagerly, as a new thought struck him. "Why can't we get up a team among the fellows of our school? There's the Webster Street and the Cherry Street schools. Each of them has a football eleven. Where do they get off, to have teams while we go without one?"

"That's right, too," assented Ted, a gleam of enthusiasm in his eyes. "Why haven't we thought of it before?"

"I suppose it's because our school is a new one and the fellows don't know each other so well," guessed Nick. "But it's a nifty idea, and I'll bet the fellows will fall for it as soon as we put it up to them."

"Sure, they will," declared Garry. "Why, we have enough fellows living right here on Hill Street to make up a good eleven. Almost, anyway. Here's three of us to start with. Then there's Si Rowe and Bill Sherwood and Shorty Gidney and Sizz Snider and—"

"Dick Randolph," suggested Ted. "Here comes Dick now."

"What are you fellows chinning about?"

asked the newcomer, a stocky, strongly built boy with a good-natured face. "Where's the rest of the gang? I thought we were all going on a hike."

"So we are, but the rest haven't turned up yet," answered Garry. "And just now we're thinking of something besides the hike."

"Seem to be all worked up about it," grinned Dick. "Gee, that football's a peacherino. Where did you get it?"

"Birthday present," replied Garry proudly. "Listen, Dick. We're talking about getting up a football team among the fellows of Hill Street School. What do you think of it?"

Dick was on fire in an instant.

"Bully!" he exclaimed. "That hits me where I live. Gee, but I'd like to play on it!"

"I thought you would," said Garry. "We were just speaking about you when you came up. We figured that with you and Si and Bill and Shorty and Sizz we'd have the beginning of a team, anyway. Then there's Rooster Long and—and—"

"What's the matter with Con Riley?" suggested Dick. "He's awfully strong, and he can run as fast as any fellow in the school."

"Con would be all right," agreed Garry, "Carl Zukor, too, isn't any slouch. And there are other good fellows to pick from, if they want to play. Oh, I don't think we'll have any

trouble in making up a rattling good team."

"And one that will lick the tar out of the Cherry Street and Webster Street teams," declared Ted, his face flushed with excitement at the thought.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Garry cautiously. "Those fellows will stand a lot of licking. They're old schools and they've had football elevens right along. Some of the fellows on them now have been playing for two or three years. And practice counts for a lot in football. But if we can get up an eleven, we'll play them, anyhow, and do our best to beat them."

"They'd kid us to death if they heard us talking that way," remarked Dick.

"Let them kid all they like," returned Garry stoutly. "Perhaps we'll do a little kidding ourselves after we've played them."

"I think we can get just as good stuff as they've got to make a team with," put in Nick. "We can get fellows that are just as big and just as fast and just as strong. But they've got a lot of fellows to coach them, fellows who have graduated. Hanson himself coached the Webster Street boys last year. You know he went from Webster to Lenox High. But our school's so new that it hasn't any graduates yet. We've got to have somebody teach us who

knows all about the game, or we'll look like a lot of dubs."

"That's right," assented Ted, a little dashed. "Who's going to do it?"

"I don't know yet," admitted Garry. "To tell the truth, I hadn't thought of it. But the first thing to do is to organize a team. Some way or other, we'll find somebody to give us points."

"Here he is now," said Bill Sherwood, a tall, muscular boy who had come up in time to catch the last words. "Points is my middle name. Ask old Doctor Sherwood anything you want to know and he'll tell you. And it won't cost you a cent, either."

"Bill hates himself, doesn't he?" laughed Ted.

"Why should I?" retorted Bill. "I'm the best friend I've got. And I've known myself a long while."

"Well, if you're so all-fired smart," said Garry, "tell us where we're going to get a good coach."

"Tom Markham has two or three good ones down in his garage," answered Bill. "Easy riding and all that."

Garry made a pass at him, which Bill adroitly ducked.

"That's what I get for trying to help you

fellows out of a fix," he complained in an aggrieved tone.

"What I was talking about was a football coach," said Garry. "You knew perfectly well what I meant."

"Cross my heart and hope to die if I did," asserted Bill. "How was I to know? I ain't a mind reader, even of such simple minds as yours. What do you want of a football coach, for the love of Pete?"

"We're thinking of getting up a football eleven of the Hill Street fellows," explained Garry.

"That's great!" exclaimed Bill, dropping his bantering tone.

"It seems easy enough to get up a pretty good team," went on Garry; "but we struck a snag when it came to thinking of some one who could train us in the fine points of the game."

"That's easy," returned Bill. "What's the matter with Mr. Phillips, our English teacher? I've heard that he used to be a crack-ajack football player when he was at Amherst."

"Mr. Phillips!" the boys exclaimed as with one voice.

"He'd be the cat's whiskers," went on Bill, enjoying the sensation he had caused.

"He sure would!" agreed Garry. "But how do we know that he'd be willing to?"

"It doesn't cost anything to ask," put in Ted. "He can't any more than say no."

"And I don't believe he would say no," added Nick. "He doesn't put on any airs, and he's a regular fellow. He'd be just as glad to see us lick Cherry Street and Webster Street as we'd be to do it."

"All right, we'll ask him on Monday morning," declared Garry. "We'll tell him that we'll give him the stuff, if he'll lick it into shape."

"I don't think I'd put it in just that way," said Ted, with a grin. "But you've got the right idea."

"I guess I'm poor," ejaculated Bill, sticking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and strutting about. "What did I tell you about putting it up to old Doc Sherwood? He never fails. Anything else you boobs would like to know?"

Garry threw the football at him and caught him in the nose. Bill staggered.

"I thought that would knock you off your perch," laughed Garry.

"Something's got to be done about this," said Bill, as he picked up the offending pigskin. "I'm going to kick this or the fellow that threw it? Which shall it be?"

"The football," suggested Garry promptly.

"All right," acceded Bill. "Just watch me lam it."

He dropped the ball and caught it right on the end of his toe. It soared high into the air, twisting as it went.

"Gee!" exclaimed Garry, as he followed its course, "I'm glad the football got that kick instead of me."

Engrossed in watching the flight of the ball, the boys had not noticed an automobile approaching. It was only the honking of a raucous horn that made them jump quickly out of the way.

It was an open car of costly make, and had no one in it but the driver, a young fellow with a weak and vicious face, some years older than Garry Grayson and his schoolmates.

The ball came down, struck a tree limb, bounced off and fell into the tonneau of the car, narrowly missing the driver. The young fellow dodged and cast a startled glance at the ball. Then he put on speed, whirled around the corner and disappeared!

CHAPTER II

On the Hike

For a moment the four boys were dumbfounded and stood as if rooted to the spot. Then they rushed to the corner.

"Hey!" yelled Garry Grayson. "Come back with that ball!"

He might as well have bayed the moon. The car was already a block away and picking up speed with every second. Impulsively the lads started to run after it, but in a moment they realized the foolishness of that and pulled up.

They looked at each other with hot indignation in their eyes.

"The crook!" exclaimed Garry. "He's nothing better than a thief. My new football!"

"It isn't as if he didn't know it was there," put in Ted Dillingham. "I saw him look at it."

"Perhaps he's just kidding us and will bring it back after he's given us a scare," suggested Nick.

"Swell chance!" snorted Bill. "He's almost out of sight now. I guess you can kiss that football good-by, Garry."

"Did any of you fellows get the number of the car?" asked Garry.

"I got the last three figures, 888," said Ted. "The car was kicking up such a dust that I couldn't make out the rest of it."

"I'm afraid that won't help us much," said Garry disappointedly. "There must have been two or three other figures in the number. I wonder where we could find out what numbers end in 888. Who gives out the licenses, anyway?"

All the boys were hazy on this point, and no suggestions were forthcoming.

"Have any of you fellows ever seen that driver before?" asked Garry in desperation.

"I've seen his face," responded Bill Sherwood; "but I can't remember where."

"I've seen him once or twice coming from the direction of Lenox High," volunteered Nick Danter. "He had books with him, too, so I guess he's a student there. But I don't think he lives in town, or more of us would know him."

"Likely he's an outsider who comes to Lenox because it has the nearest high school," conjectured Ted. "There are lots of fellows who do that."

"Well, if I ever see that ugly mug again I'll tackle the fellow, big as he is," declared Garry. "He'll either give back that football or I'll

know the reason why. A brand new ball! And to lose it this way the first day I got it!"

"It sure is tough luck," consoled Ted. "He must be a low-down, mangy cur. There isn't one fellow in a thousand would do a thing like that!"

By this time several other friends of Garry's had come up, including "Rooster" Long and "Sloppy" Hume. They were quite as indignant as the rest of his mates when they heard Garry's tale of woe.

But the latter, though his wrath still simmered, had by this time got back his self control.

"Oh, well," he remarked, "it isn't as though the sky had caved in. There are other footballs where that came from. We can't help it if there are rogues in the world. Let's think of something pleasanter. You fellows all ready for the hike?"

"All set and r'arin' to go," answered Sloppy Hume for the bunch.

"Just wait here till I go in and get my grub," said Garry, as he started for the gate. "Gee, I hate to tell the folks that I've lost my ball already!"

"Don't tell them," counseled Bill. "Bad news can always wait."

"And maybe you'll get it back before the day is over," added Ted.

"No such luck," prophesied Garry, as he passed through the gate and up to the house.

It was a handsome, substantial house, one of the best in Lenox, a thriving town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants. It stood in the choice residential district, on the corner of Hill and Maple Streets. Garry had been born in it about thirteen years before. His father was one of the leading lawyers of the town and a leader in all civic activities.

Garry was a frank, likable boy, straightforward, truthful and courageous. He was a good scholar and stood well in all his classes at the Hill Street Grammar School, which was about two blocks from his home. He was of medium height, strongly built, fleet of foot and a leader in boyish sports. He had brown eyes, brown wavy hair, and a straight nose that indicated decision and force of character.

His two most intimate chums were Nick Danter and Ted Dillingham, whose fathers were partners in the leading department store of the town. Ted resembled Garry in general make-up, but was more impulsive. He had red hair and the temper that usually goes with it, and was likely to go off the handle at the slightest provocation. Nick was tall and slender and a bit more studious and reserved than either of his chums. But the three were the best of friends, thoroughly congenial, and where one

was found the others were usually not far off.

Garry was blessed with a twin sister, Ella, a pretty, sprightly girl of mischievous disposition. There were times, it must be admitted, when Garry was disposed to question whether this was indeed a blessing, though they were greatly attached to each other, for Ella was a born tease and lost no opportunity of taking the wind out of Garry's sails. He was not bad at repartee himself, and often gave her as good as she sent, but Ella had nimble wits, and the honors usually remained with her in their verbal combats.

She was the first to greet him as he came in.

"I just do love the way that lock of hair droops over your forehead," she said. "It's too sweet and cute for anything. Somebody will be kidnaping you the first thing you know. You ought to be in the movies."

Garry gazed at her in silent scorn that should have squelched her but did not.

"Too bad the poor boy is tongue-tied," she went on. "But after all that won't count in the movies."

"Nobody will ever accuse you of being tongue-tied," retorted Garry. "It would be a mighty good thing if you were. Your tongue is hung in the middle and loose at both ends."

"Is that the way to talk to dear little sister?"

reproved Ella, pretending to wipe away a tear. "Well, that just goes to show that good looks and good manners don't always go together. And just when I was telling you how handsome you looked!"

"Has Hannah put up that lunch for me, Mother?" asked Garry.

"Here it is," replied his mother, picking up the bag that the maid had packed. "I told her to make it particularly nice because it was your birthday. I suppose you've been having great sport with that new football."

"Where is it?" asked Ella quickly. "I didn't see you bring it in. It can't be that you've lost it already!"

"That's just what I have!" blurted out Garry. "That is, it's been stolen from me."

"Stolen?" exclaimed his mother, "How did that happen?"

"Did some big bad man take it away from him, bless his little heart?" asked Ella.

"Keep still, Ella," commanded her mother. "You've done nothing but tease Garry ever since he came in. Now, Garry, tell me all about it."

Garry narrated the incident in all its details and Mrs. Grayson listened with sympathy for the boy and growing resentment at the fellow who had made off with the ball.

"It's a burning shame!" she exclaimed at

the end of the recital. "I didn't think there was any one in Lenox who would do such a thing! But don't worry about the ball, Garry dear. Dad will get you another one."

"And you'd better tie a string to that" put in the irrepressible Ella. "Then you can yank it back when it wants to go for a ride."

Her mother silenced Ella for the moment with a look.

"Don't let that spoil the enjoyment of your hike," counseled Mrs. Grayson, as she patted Garry on the shoulder. "I hope you'll have the best kind of a time. Only be sure to get back before dark."

"I will," promised Garry, as he shouldered his bag.

"It looks as though it were going to rain," remarked Ella, as she glanced out of the window. "You'd better make him take an umbrella along, Mother. It would be too bad to have the rain spoil his good looks."

"Since when were you a weather prophet?" gibed Garry. "I don't believe it will rain at all, and I'm not going to be bothered with an old umbrella. If the rain comes down hard, I can get into some place until it stops."

"But do you know enough to go in when it rains?" was Ella's Parthian shot, which Garry pretended not to hear as he hurried down the steps, glad to be freed of his tormentor. He

had an uneasy feeling that he had not been up to his best form that morning. Ella had scored on him too easily.

He cast a glance back and saw her standing at the window. She made a face at him. Garry frowned. Then she threw a kiss to him. Garry grinned. Ella was not such a bad skate after all.

"What kept you so long?" asked Bill Sherwood as Garry joined the group impatiently waiting for him.

"Been telling the sad story of your life?" inquired Ted.

"Not exactly," replied Garry. "But Ella tumbled to the fact that I didn't have the ball with me and I had to tell them all about it."

"I'll bet they were sore," remarked Dick.

"They sure were," acquiesced Garry. "And so will dad be when he hears of it."

But despite the chagrin that had been occasioned by the loss of the football, it was not in boy nature to remain despondent for long, especially on a Saturday when books had been laid aside and there was a good long hike in the country in prospect. In a few minutes they were laughing and joking as though they had not a care in the world.

It was a wholesome lot of boys that composed the party. Most of them had been born and brought up in Lenox, and had known each other

all through their boyhood. They had had their scraps, of course, as all boys do, but these had not amounted to much and had soon been forgotten. All of them were in the senior class of the Hill Street Grammar School, and most of them were looking forward to going into Lenox High the following year.

To the general high spirits of the group there was, however, one exception. That was in the person of "Rooster" Long, who had gained his nickname from a stubborn lock of hair that would not stay in place, but stood up in a way to suggest a rooster's comb.

Usually he was the life of the party, but today he seemed to be in the doldrums about something. The smiles he summoned up when somebody cracked a joke were forced and mechanical. He answered when he was spoken to, but usually in monosyllables.

"What's eating you, Rooster?" asked Garry inelegantly, as he slapped his comrade on the back.

"Oh, nothing," answered Rooster vaguely.

"Snap out of it, old boy," adjured Bill. "Any one might think you were going to a funeral."

"Guess his breakfast hasn't agreed with him," conjectured Ted Dillingham.

"Anybody sick at home?" queried Nick Danter.

"Nothing like that," replied Rooster. "I'm all right. And to prove it I'll beat the whole bunch to that tree over there."

His companions accepted the challenge immediately, and a hot race ensued with Rooster making his boast good, though he beat Garry only by the proverbial eyelash.

"You two surely made the dust fly," was Bill Sherwood's tribute, as he drew up pantingly beside the leaders. "I can see what you're cut out for on that football team of ours when we start making it up."

"What's that?" inquired Garry.

"Fullbacks or halfbacks," answered Bill. "They're the fellows on the team that have to have wings."

"That's right," agreed Ted. "But the ends have to be pretty fast, too, to get down under punts."

"Every fellow on the team has to be pretty fast, for that matter," declared Garry. "There's no place for snails on a football eleven."

"That would seem to leave me out," complained Sloppy Hume, who was built on the general plan of an elephant and had come in last in the race.

"Not at all," consoled Garry. "We need beef as well as speed on the team. You'd fit in mighty well as a guard or at center. They

couldn't get past you without hitting you somewhere."

"And if Sloppy once fell on a guy, he'd put him out of business," put in Ted.

"And if he fell on the ball, he'd bust it," grinned Nick.

"I'll bet we could pick out an eleven right now," said Garry, as he counted noses. "There are just that many of us here. One quarterback, one center, one fullback, two halfbacks, two guards, two tackles, two ends. Now what positions would you fellows like to play?"

"I guess it doesn't make much difference what we'd like," remarked Bill. "That will be up to Mr. Phillips—or whoever we get to coach us. He'll look us over, size us up, and then put us in the position he thinks we can fill best."

"I hadn't thought of that," admitted Garry. "That's a new one on me, as the monkey said when he scratched his back. But you're right at that. He'll be the boss, and it will be up to us to do just what he says."

"And I guess there isn't any tougher boss than the coach of a football team," put in Nick Danter a little apprehensively. "I've heard Wilson, the coach of Lenox High, calling down some of his fellows until I wondered they didn't take a crack at him. But they just got red and took it as meekly as lambs."

"Yes, and do you know why?" replied Garry. "Because they knew that he knew more than they did, and they were willing to learn. And then, too, they were so anxious to have Lenox win that they didn't care anything about themselves. That's the way we'll have to feel about our Hill Street school if we make up a team. What do we care what happens to ourselves if we can put the kibosh on Cherry Street and Webster Street?"

"That's the way to talk!" exclaimed Ted enthusiastically. "The coach can walk all over me, if he wants to. And if he puts me out of the game, I'll yell myself hoarse on the side lines. He— Ginger! what's that?" as a big drop splashed on his hand.

"It's rain," replied Bill Sherwood, as he looked at the black cloud that had come up without their noticing it, so engrossed had they been in their discussion. "By the looks of that cloud, it'll be coming down in bucketfuls in a few minutes. Looks as though we were in for a soaking."

"Ella was right, after all," admitted Garry. "She said I ought to bring an umbrella along. Gee, how she'll josh me when I get back!"

The rain now began to come down smartly, and the boys looked about them for some place of shelter.

At a little distance was a large house with

considerable ground about it. A barn that evidently belonged to the owner of the house stood off a little to the right, and Garry noted that the door stood invitingly open.

"Let's make for that, fellows," he suggested. "The people won't mind if we stay in it till the rain stops. I don't think it's going to be any more than a shower, anyway."

The crowd put off for the barn on a run, and had no more than passed the door before the rain came down in torrents.

"A bit of luck that this barn was so handy," panted Garry Grayson, as he squatted on the floor. "I'd hate to go around the rest of the day in wet clothes."

"I hope this shower doesn't last long," grumbled Bill. "For the love of Pete, why can't the weather man pick out some other day than Saturday for rain?"

"And I wanted to take a swim in Bass Lake before we went back!" mourned Nick.

"You may have a chance to do it yet," said Garry optimistically. "And since we're here, why not put on the nose bags and eat our lunch? I'm as hungry as a wolf."

The suggestion met with unanimous approval, and the boys were soon munching away at the generous supplies that each had brought along.

"It's all wrong to call this a barn," remarked

Ted, as he looked around him. "No sign of any horses. Whatever it used to be, it's a garage now," and he pointed to two cars, one a small runabout and the other a handsome touring car.

"That big one's a nifty machine," commented Garry. "Looks as though it could burn up the road. It's—"

He stopped short, his mouth wide open. Then he sprang to his feet and ran to the back of the car.

"What did you say the figures were on the car of that fellow who swiped my football, Ted?" he asked, his voice shaking with excitement.

"The three last were eight, eight, eight," replied Ted.

"Look here, fellows!" called Garry.

The others crowded round Garry and read the number of the car:

"19,888!"

CHAPTER III

The Telltale Number

"Gee! I'll bet this is the car that trapped your football," exclaimed Ted Dillingham, his eyes almost starting from his head. "That number gives it away."

"And it looks just like the car," put in Nick Danter, standing a little way back so that he could get a good look at it. "The same color, maroon."

"This car's been out this morning, too," declared Bill, as he put out his hand and touched the radiator. "It's still warm. Jimminy, what a bit of luck to come across it in this way!"

"Let's look in the tonneau and see if the ball's still there," suggested Sloppy.

"Swell chance!" scoffed Rooster Long. "The first thing that crook would do would be to hide it somewhere."

Nevertheless, eleven pairs of eager eyes searched the car, front and back, without results.

"Well, now that we've found the car, what

are we going to do about finding the ball?" asked Dick Randolph.

"That's the question," pondered Garry. "Of course, we're not dead sure yet that it is the same car, for there might have been other figures before that 888."

"But it isn't at all likely," added Nick. "Come off, Garry!"

"I'm not so sure," retorted Garry Grayson. "But I'll tell you what I'm going to do! I'm going right up to that house and ask for the ball. If I see the fellow there that was driving the car, I'll know I'm right. And if I find I've made a mistake, the worst I'll have to do will be to apologize."

Just then a shadow darkened the door. The boys looked up to see a man, roughly dressed and evidently a hired hand, come into the barn.

"Hello!" he said, in surprise, as he saw the crowd of boys. "What are you youngsters doing here?"

"We came in here to get out of the rain," explained Garry. "I suppose we ought to have gone up to the house to ask permission, but we'd have been soaked through if we had, and we didn't think any one would mind."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the man, who seemed to be a good-natured fellow. "I don't mind, and I don't think Mr. Podder would, either."

Garry noted that Rooster Long started at the mention of the name, but he was too much interested in following the lead to give the matter any attention.

"Is Mr. Podder the man who owns this place?" questioned Garry.

"Yes," answered the man. "And a lot of other property around here, too. Guess he's one of the richest men in the county. He's a dealer in horses."

"I wouldn't have thought that!" replied Garry. "I don't see any horses around here."

"There used to be," was the answer. "But this place has become too little. He has a big horse barn on the other end of the property and a half mile running track where he trains them. All this old barn is good for now is to keep the cars in."

"Pretty fine cars, too," commented Garry. "Especially this big maroon car. I'll bet Mr. Podder gets lots of fun in driving this about. I know I would, if I were old enough."

"Not much good the car does him," replied the man, as he busied himself in wiping the dust from the machine. "He's too busy, and most of the time he uses the little roadster in getting from place to place. But Sandy makes up for that. He almost lives in the car."

"Is Sandy Mr. Podder's son?" asked Garry.

"Yes," was the reply. "The only one he's

got. And I guess the old man thinks that's plenty."

From his tone, it was apparent to the boys that Sandy Podder was not especially popular with the hired man.

"Car's pretty dusty," remarked Garry carelessly.

"It's been out this morning," the man replied. "Sandy just got back a little while ago from Lenox. And he's going out again this afternoon, if the rain lets up."

Garry had found out all he wanted to know. He had a moral certainty that he had come across the trail of the fellow who had made away with the ball.

But this was only a part of his problem; a great part, but still only a part. He had not yet got the ball back. Suppose the fellow denied taking it? A boy who would be mean enough to make off with the ball would probably fib to retain it.

Garry went to the door and looked across at the big house. The rain was still coming down in torrents, and he could not see clearly through the blinding sheets. Still he could discern the figure of a young fellow seated on the porch with his chair tilted against the wall.

"I suppose that's Sandy over there," he remarked to the hired man.

"Yep, that's him," replied the man after a

casual glance. "And probably growling like sin because the rain keeps him from goin' gallivantin' round the country. But from the way it looks, the car's goin' to get a rest for the rest of the day."

A look from Garry warned his mates not to mention the matter they had in mind. They took the hint and broke up into small groups, talking about indifferent matters.

Rooster motioned to Garry and led him a little aside from the rest.

"Going over to tackle Sandy about the football?" he asked anxiously.

"You bet I am!" replied Garry emphatically. "Just the minute this rain lets up a little, too!"

"That's all right," replied Rooster. "I would, too, if I were in your place. But would you mind if I didn't go over with you?"

"Why, I rather expected that all the gang would come along," said Garry, in some surprise. "But of course you don't have to if you don't want to. But what's the big idea? Been having a run in with that fellow, or something?"

"Nothing like that," replied Rooster. "I never spoke a word to the fellow. But my father's been having some trouble with Mr. Podder about a deal in horses. You know, they're both in the same line of business."

"I know they are," replied Garry. "I'm mighty sorry if your father's in any trouble. What's it all about? That is, of course, if you care to tell. I don't want to butt in."

"I can't get the rights of it myself exactly," answered Rooster in a troubled tone. "It's something about a deal they had in horses. As near as I can make out, dad says he sent Mr. Podder a lot of money, three thousand dollars or something like that, which he owed him in a deal, and Mr. Podder says that he never got the money. Dad says Mr. Podder is trying to put him in a hole. There's been a lot of fussing about it, talk of lawsuits and things like that, and dad's near worried to death. I've heard him walking the floor sometimes nights when he thought the rest of us were asleep."

"I suppose you think it may make things worse for your father if you get mixed up in any muss with Mr. Podder's son," mused Garry.

"That's just it," agreed Rooster. "Dad's got trouble enough without my adding to it."

"Just the way I'd feel," declared Garry warmly. "All right, Rooster, you keep clear of the mixup, if there's going to be any. You stay here till I've seen his nibs, and then we'll get together again. I wonder if it's ever going to stop raining!"

It seemed for a time that it would not, but

after half an hour more of restless waiting the rain subsided to a drizzle and the clouds began to break away.

"Come along, fellows," sang out Garry, his spirits rising with the prospects of a tussle for his rights.

They tumbled out of the barn after him, all with the exception of Rooster Long, while the hired man looked after them in mild surprise at their hurried exit.

Straight across the lawn they went to the big house.

As they approached, the figure on the porch moved and the tilted chair came down with a crash.

As the boys came nearer they clearly recognized in the occupant of the porch the boy who had driven the car into which the football had fallen.

Sandy Podder rose with a scowl and leaned over the porch railing.

"What do you fellows want?" he growled.

"I want my football," replied Garry boldly.

CHAPTER IV

Sandy Is Caught

Sandy Podder started violently. It was evident that he had been caught off his guard. But he recovered himself at once and his scowl became more pronounced.

"Where do you get that stuff?" he demanded. "What are you talking about? I don't know anything about your football."

"Yes, you do," replied Garry, trying to keep his temper. "You carried it off in your car this morning. Come across with it."

"You must be crazy," Sandy retorted. "I tell you I never saw your football. Don't know anything about it. What do you think I am, a thief?"

"I'm not calling any names," replied Garry. "But my football fell in your car this morning and you drove off with it. Come across."

"Now I know you're crazy," roared Sandy. "I wasn't out in the car this morning."

"Your hired man said you were," declared Garry. "He told us that you drove down to Lenox and back."

For a moment Sandy quailed. Then he fell back once more on bluster.

"He doesn't know what he's talking about," he snarled. "Now you kids get off this lawn, and get off quick. Beat it before I set the dogs on you."

"We're not afraid of your dogs," replied Garry, made angry by this threat. "You can't bluff us off like that. I want that football, and I'm not going away until I get it."

Sandy's face was convulsed with rage.

"You won't, eh?" he snarled. "I'll—"

The front door of the house opened and a woman stood in the doorway.

"Sandy," she said, "why did you leave that football in the hall? I nearly broke my neck over it just now."

Sandy took a step toward her.

"Mother!" he called out in alarm.

But he was too late. The mischief had been done. Garry was quick to take advantage of it.

"Would you mind letting me have a look at that football, Mrs. Podder?" he asked her eagerly.

"Don't you do it, Mother!" urged Sandy. "These nervy kids are saying that my football belongs to one of them. I wish you'd tell them to get off these grounds. They make me sick."

His mother looked at Sandy uncertainly, and then her glance wandered over the group of boys.

"What makes you think Sandy has your football?" she asked of Garry.

"It fell into his car this morning, and he drove off with it," explained Garry. "If you'll just let me take a look at it, I'll tell you whether it's mine in a minute."

"Are you going to let these brats tell you what to do in your own house?" demanded Sandy furiously.

"I don't see why I shouldn't let the boy see it," replied Mrs. Podder slowly. "It may prove to him that he's mistaken, and that will make things all right."

At this partial assent Garry moved toward the steps.

"If he comes up on this porch I'll give him a clip in the jaw," threatened Sandy, whose pasty face was now a yellowish green.

"Careful, Sandy! Behave yourself!" commanded his mother sharply. "There isn't going to be any fighting here. I'll get the ball myself."

She stepped back into the hall. In a moment she reappeared with the football in her hand. Garry's heart gave a bound as he recognized it.

"Is this your football?" she asked, as she handed it to Garry.

"Of course, he'll say it is," sneered Sandy, now on the defensive.

"That's my ball!" exclaimed Garry, as he

handled it caressingly. "It's a brand new one that my father gave me this morning for a birthday present. You can see that it's scarcely been used at all!"

"There are thousands of footballs just like it in the world," put in Sandy. "How can he tell it's his? Can't you see he's just taking you for an easy mark, Mother? Why don't you send him kiting?"

"If it's your ball, Sandy, when did you get it?" asked his mother. "I didn't know you had a new football."

"I—I've had it for a long time," mumbled Sandy. "I—I haven't used it yet because the football season has hardly begun. Do you mean to say," he added in an aggrieved tone, "that you're going to take his word against mine?"

"What makes you so sure that it's your ball?" asked Mrs. Podder of Garry. "As Sandy says, new footballs look much alike, and it seems to me it would be very easy to make a mistake."

"Look at this!" said Garry triumphantly, and he held out the ball to her.

Close to the lacing were the initials "G. G."

"I put that there this morning," explained Garry, "so that if it got lost I could prove it was mine. My name is Garrison Grayson, although everybody calls me Garry."

Sandy's face became livid. He was clearly pushed into a corner. Even then, however, he tried to prevaricate.

"Maybe he's put those letters on just now while he was holding it," he muttered.

Garry opened his hands wide to show that he had no pencil. The evidence was conclusive.

"You can take the ball," said Mrs. Podder sadly, as she handed it back to Garry. "What did you mean, Sandy?" she added, as she faced her cringing son, "by telling me such falsehoods?"

"It was mine," growled Sandy surlily. "If I found it in my car, doesn't it belong to me? Findings is keepings."

Garry and his chums lost no time in getting off the grounds. They were sorry for Mrs. Podder, knew that she felt ashamed and humiliated, and they were glad to get away as quickly as possible.

"The rain wasn't such a bad thing after all," chuckled Dick Randolph. "If it hadn't been for that we wouldn't have gone to the barn, and Sandy would be still laughing up his sleeve at the way he had bilked us."

"He won't feel like laughing for some time to come," prophesied Sloppy Hume.

The lads stopped at the barn to pick up Rooster Long, who was just as delighted as

the rest when he saw the football tucked under Garry's arm.

The hired man looked at them with some curiosity.

"What were you kids doing over at the house?" he asked. "Looked as though there were going to be ructions. Thought I might be called on to keep the peace. Sandy seemed to be a bit peeved about something."

"He was peeved more than a bit," replied the grinning Garry. "But everything's all right now. Come along, Rooster." Then, with thanks to the man for his good nature in the matter of the barn, the boys went gleefully on their way.

By this time the sun had come out, and the hikers had a glorious time for the rest of the afternoon. They were not cheated out of their hoped-for swim in Bass Lake, a beautiful sheet of water that furnished them with fishing, boating, and other recreations in summer and made an admirable skating place in winter. After their swim they took turns in kicking the football, which had plenty of hard usage on their way home.

"Then it's understood that you'll tackle Mr. Phillips on Monday about coaching us?" remarked Bill Sherwood, as he parted from Garry at his gate.

"Sure thing," promised Garry. "I can

hardly wait for Monday to come. I only hope he won't refuse. If he does, we're up a tree."

"He won't refuse," predicted Bill. "Take old Doc Sherwood's word for that. What he says goes."

Ella was not at the window as Garry went up the path, and he sneaked the football in without being seen. He left it near the hat-rack in the hall and went into the dining room, where the table was being spread for supper.

Ella, who was doing a bit of embroidery, looked up with a glint of triumph in her eyes.

"I told you you ought to take an umbrella along," she remarked. "I suppose you got wet to the skin."

"Didn't get a drop of it," replied Garry. "Catch me doing anything that a silly girl tells me to. Not on your tintype!"

Ella looked a trifle disappointed.

"I may be silly," she retorted, "but I'm not goop enough to lose a birthday present the very day it's given to me."

"How could I help it?" replied Garry, with pretended gloom.

"By being careful," asserted Ella. "You ought to have seen that an auto was coming. You wouldn't catch me being so dumb."

"Oh, what's the use of ragging a fellow?" grumbled Garry, heaving a sigh.

"No use, I suppose," admitted Ella.

"You'll do the same thing over again, or something else just as crazy. You ought to have a guardian."

"I may get it back yet," declared Garry, as he stepped out into the hall.

Ella threw back her head and laughed heartily.

"You'll never see that football again," she predicted.

"Iz zhat so?" crowed Garry, as he returned holding aloft the ball. "Take a look at this."

Ella's eyes widened until they looked like moons.

"Dumb, am I? Ought to have a guardian, ought I? Never see it again, sha'n't I? Who's looney now?"

"Oh, Garry!" exclaimed Ella breathlessly, "how did you get it again?"

"I'd tell you if I wasn't so dumb," replied Garry. "But how can a dumb person speak?"

CHAPTER V

Right from the Shoulder

Ella stamped her foot with vexation.

"I think you're just too mean for anything, Garry Grayson!" she exclaimed. "You might tell me where you got it."

"I might," returned Garry judicially. "But little girls shouldn't be too curious. That's the great trouble with girls, anyway. They keep pestering boys with questions. Then, too, I doubt whether you'd be able to understand detective work. Think of a great detective telling girls how he does his work!"

Garry strutted around like a turkey cock, his head held high in the air.

"Mother," Ella appealed to Mrs. Grayson, who just then entered the room, "won't you make Garry stop teasing me? He's just driving me crazy!"

"That's too bad," replied Mrs. Grayson, with a little twinkle in her eyes. "Especially so, since you never do any teasing yourself. What's he been teasing you about?"

"He got his football back, and he won't tell

me how he got it," returned the aggrieved Ella.

"Got it back?" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson, her eyes lighting up with pleasure. "Oh, I'm so glad, Garry dear. Tell me all about it!"

"Come into the other room where Ella can't hear us, and I'll tell you," said Garry, with a mischievous glance at his sister.

"I'll do nothing of the kind," laughed his mother. "Now, Garry, stop your teasing and tell us."

Garry, feeling that at last he had paid off some old scores, dropped his nonsense and told the whole story.

Mother and sister listened with attention and with frequent questions and interruptions.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson when he had finished. "It doesn't seem possible that any one could be so mean as Sandy Podder. I'd hate to be his mother. Poor woman! She must have been cut to the heart."

"She did seem sad," replied Garry. "I was glad to get away as soon as I could. And I'd have hated to be in Sandy's shoes. He looked like a whipped cur."

Mr. Grayson came in soon after, and he was quite as keenly interested as the rest of the family in Garry's adventure.

"That Podder lad is a poor lot," he remarked. "He's in with a fast set at the high school, and I've heard things about him that

weren't to his credit. His father gives him too much money to spend and doesn't seem to care much how he spends it. The boy's allowed to run wild. His mother does what she can to restrain him, but she can't do much as long as her husband doesn't back her up. But I didn't think the boy would go so far as to do what practically amounts to stealing. For that matter, though, Mr. Podder himself doesn't set his boy a very good example."

"What do you mean?" asked his wife.

"Oh, not that he's done anything, so far as I know, that the law could lay its hand on," replied Mr. Grayson. "But sometimes he seems to be skating on pretty thin ice. Sharp practices, cunning clauses in contracts, oppression, overreaching—things that the best kind of business men don't do. Not the kind of man you'd be willing to trust with your last dollar. I shouldn't be surprised if Sandy came naturally by some of his meanness."

"Going to tackle Mr. Phillips on acting as coach for us, Garry?" asked Ted on Monday morning, as he overtook his chum on the way to school.

"Sure thing," replied Garry. "And I'm trembling in my shoes for fear he'll turn us down."

"No fear of that," said Ted confidently. "He's a regular fellow, and he'll do all that

he can to help us out. He wouldn't be much of a sport if he didn't."

Despite Ted's assurance, it was with some trepidation that Garry approached the teacher of English after school had been dismissed.

Mr. Phillips was sitting at his desk, making out his reports. He looked up as Garry drew near.

"What is it, Grayson?" he asked.

"Please, Mr. Phillips," said Garry, "I wanted to ask you if you'd coach our school football team?"

"School football team?" repeated the teacher, in some surprise. "We haven't any."

"No; but we're going to have," replied Garry. "That is, if we can find some one to coach us in the fine points of the game."

Mr. Phillips laid aside his pen.

"Now, that's interesting," he said, the look of an old player who sniffs the battle from afar coming into his eyes. "I'm mighty glad to hear it. There's no finer sport than football. What's the idea? To play with other boys of the town of about your own age?"

"We'll play with any boys who can give us practice," replied Garry. "But what we're thinking of specially is to play the teams of the Cherry Street and Webster Street Schools. We'd like to beat them if we can."

"That's the right spirit," laughed Mr. Phil-

lips. "But it's a rather ambitious program. As I understand it, they've had teams for several years, and there must be a lot of experienced players in this year's teams."

"There are," admitted Garry. "But they haven't got any bigger or stronger or faster boys than we have. Anyway, we're willing to tackle them. They can't any more than lick us."

Mr. Phillips smiled as he looked at the boy's flushed face.

"I'll coach you," he said, and at the words Garry's heart gave a bound. "Pass the word among the boys who want to play, and tell them to meet me in the gymnasium to-morrow afternoon after school. I'll look them over and pick out a team. If there are enough of you, I may pick out two teams, so that you can get practice against each other. Bring two or three footballs with you, if you can scare up that many."

"That will be great, Mr. Phillips! Thank you very much!" exclaimed Garry, as he hurried out of the building to meet a large number of his friends who were waiting eagerly to hear the outcome of the conference.

"Is he going to do it?" asked Ted Dillingham eagerly.

"Surest thing you know!" exulted Garry. "Didn't have any trouble at all. I tell you he's

the stuff. Seemed tickled that the school is going to have a team. Wants all the fellows that want to play to meet him in the gym to-morrow afternoon after school."

"Will we be there?" chuckled Bill, throwing his cap into the air.

"With both feet!" declared Rooster.

Before the afternoon ended almost all the boys of the school had heard in one way or another of the plans that were afoot. Those who were athletically inclined welcomed the news with enthusiasm, and those who had no hope of making the team were almost equally excited. The school spirit was thoroughly aroused. Cherry Street and Webster Street had lorded it over them long enough. Now Hill Street was to have a team of its own.

The whole school would have gladly flocked to the gymnasium on the following afternoon, but in a brief announcement made by Mr. Phillips just before the close of school he emphasized the fact that he wanted only those who were candidates for the team.

About thirty of the boys thought that they might have a chance, and it was that number Mr. Phillips faced when he gathered them into a group at one side of the gymnasium.

"Now, boys," he began in easy fashion, "we've met, as you know, to organize a football eleven. I was rather surprised when Grayson

spoke to me about it yesterday afternoon, but I was very much pleased as well. There's no better game for boys to develop courage and determination, quick thinking and quick acting and the spirit of true sportsmanship. I feel, too, that it will be a good thing in promoting loyalty to the school. We want Hill Street School to be right at the top in everything, in sport as well as in scholarship."

There was a murmur of applause from his eager listeners.

"I see that you agree with me," went on the speaker with a smile. "You notice that I put sport and scholarship together. I want that they should stay together. I should be very sorry if you boys became so interested in football that you neglected your lessons. And I tell you right now that the minute I see that any member of the team is falling behind in his studies that minute he ceases to be a member of the team. I want that thoroughly understood before we go any further."

A vigorous nodding of heads testified that the boys had no doubt of his meaning.

"Another thing," went on their coach, "is that every game must be played according to the rules. There must be no dirty football, no slugging, no trying to get away with anything underhand just because you think the referee may not see it. A game won that way isn't

worth winning. I know that in the excitement of the game it is very easy to be carried away and do things that you wouldn't do if you were cooler. But one of the most valuable things about football is that it teaches you to control your temper. The fact that the other side is playing dirty ball doesn't justify you in doing the same thing. We want to win fairly, or we don't want to win at all. Do you agree with me? If so put up your hands."

Every boy raised his hand. Bill Sherwood in his enthusiasm put up two.

"I'll take that as a pledge, and I'm going to hold you to it," said Mr. Phillips, smiling. "And now I'm coming to one of the most important points of all. No one of you is playing for himself. He's playing for the team. It's a very natural thing to desire to shine, to stand out from the others, to be the bright particular star of the game. But you mustn't try to hog the limelight, to win the applause of those who may be looking on. You're to forget all about yourself and think only of the team. There may be times when I'll have to take one of you out and put somebody else in his place. If so, you mustn't be sore at me or the fellow that gets your position. You must feel that I had some good reason for doing what I do and that it's all for the good of the team. It's the team you must root for, whether you're right in the

thick of the playing or simply standing on the side lines."

"That's the stuff!" exclaimed Ted, and then blushed at having interrupted.

"Now of course," Mr. Phillips resumed, "we'll have to start in very simply and go ahead gradually. We want to get well grounded in the fundamentals of the game. I take it for granted that most of you boys understand the main features. You've seen the games played by Lenox High and by the Cherry and Webster Street Schools. You know what is meant by downs and punts and blocking and tackling. I want each one of you who may be chosen for the team to get a book of the rules and study them thoroughly. Ask me about anything you don't understand, and I'll be glad to explain. Now I'm going to look you boys over and see how you size up for the team. But we're a little cramped in here. Come out on the field."

He led the way and the boys, tense with excitement, followed him.

CHAPTER VI

Picking the Team

"Gee, our school lays all over Cherry and Webster in the matter of a playing field, anyway!" exulted Garry, as the Hill Street boys trooped out on the field in the wake of Mr. Phillips.

The statement was justified. The older schools had been established many years before at a time when but little attention was given to the physical development of the pupils. Though each had a gymnasium in the basement, they were surrounded only by a small school yard, and later the town had grown so thickly about them that it was impossible to secure the larger space required. So the school teams were forced to practice where they could in open fields or, when they could get it, the baseball park of the town.

The city fathers had taken a lesson from this, and when the Hill Street School had been planned a large area adjoining the building had been secured. This had been laid out for a baseball field, a football oval, and tennis courts,

while a cinder running track surrounded the whole.

"Now," said Mr. Phillips, "I'm going to see what kind of runners you boys are. For running is one of the most important features of the game. Some positions require more speed than others, but all the members of the team have to be reasonably fast. Now get down on your fingers and toes, just as you would at the beginning of a play, and run down the field as fast as you can when I give the word. Stop when you get on a level with that post," indicating one about fifty yards away. "All set? Ready! Go!"

The boys were up and away like a pack of hounds slipped from the leash, and pulled up panting with Garry Grayson, Nick Danter, Rooster Long and Dick Randolph in the van.

"Not bad," pronounced Mr. Phillips, as he came up with them. "Take a minute or so to get your breath, and then race back to where you started."

They obeyed, and finished at the original starting point with about the same results as before.

The coach had watched them like a hawk, and with the skill of an old campaigner had gained a fairly accurate estimate of the possibilities of each.

"Now we'll try a little punting," he said.

"But as that isn't as easy as it looks, I'll give you a little object lesson as to how it ought to be done. Give me one of those footballs."

Eager hands passed one over.

"Here, Grayson," said Mr. Phillips, "stand over there about ten feet and pretend that you are center. Pass the ball back to me."

With considerable trepidation Garry complied and made a fairly good pass. Mr. Phillips caught it deftly, shaped the ball in his hands, took a step forward, dropped the ball and caught it on his instep as his right foot swung forward. The ball rose high in the air and soared straight ahead for a distance of fifty yards.

"Gee, that was a peach of a punt!" exclaimed Bill Sherwood.

Mr. Phillips smiled. Punting had been one of his specialties at Amherst.

"Now you boys try it," he directed. "Remember that you don't kick it with your toe. Catch it in your instep. And don't throw the ball in the air. Simply open your hands and let it drop. Try to meet the ball when it's about two feet from the ground."

For the next few minutes the air was full of flying footballs, as the boys took their turns. It was by no means as easy as it had looked to be when Mr. Phillips did it. In some cases the kickers missed it altogether. In others the ball

slipped off to the side and went only a few feet. Only a few got distance and accuracy combined, and some of the attempts were little less than ludicrous.

"That will do for the present," said the coach at length. "Drop kicking and place kicking we'll leave till later on. I've seen enough to get a fairly good line on you boys, and now I'm going to pick out a team."

At this announcement all the boys straightened up and tried to look as sturdy and tall as possible, hoping the lightning might strike in their direction. Some even stood on their toes a trifle to add to their height.

"Remember," said Mr. Phillips, as he surveyed their flushed, eager faces, "that the boys I pick to-day will be only a guess-work team. Half of them may be out a week from now, if they don't make good, and others will be put in their places. So don't think you haven't a chance if I don't choose you to-day. I said I was going to pick out a team. As a matter of fact, I'm going to choose two teams, a first and a second, so that you can practice together. I don't want the boys I pick for the first team to get chesty, and I don't want the boys I pick for the second to get sore. The boy who is one of the scrubs to-day may be on the regulars to-morrow, or it may be the other way around. It's up to you and the way you play. Every

boy on the regular team will have to fight to stay there all through the season. If he falls down he'll be taken out and some one else put in his place."

He put his hand on Bill Sherwood's shoulder.

"You're just about the right size and build for center, Sherwood, and you have some well developed muscles there," he said, feeling his arms. "I give you fair warning that you'll have a lot of work to do. Remember that you make the first move in every play. Most of the time you snap the ball to the quarterback, and he'll give it to the man he has chosen for that special play. That is what is called the indirect pass. Sometimes, though, you'll snap it to one of the backs or some other player. That is the direct pass. But mostly you'll deal with the quarterback."

He beckoned to Garry.

"I'm going to start you off at quarterback, Grayson," he said. "I'm going to make you the captain of the team, too. The two positions don't always go together, but when other things are equal they ought to, for the quarterback has to do most of the thinking for the team. You are the one that will figure out every play and give the signal for it. You'll have to decide when it's best to buck the line or kick for goal or try for an end run. You'll have to think quickly and act quickly. Of

course, you'll take part in a lot of the plays, but your biggest task will be to tell the other fellows what to do. I'll work out a set of signals for you later on. Now you boys come over here and practice snapping the ball back."

He stationed Bill a little in advance of Garry with his back toward him.

"Now, Sherwood," he directed, "stand with your right leg about two feet back of your left. Put your hands about one end of the ball and snap it back between your legs so that it lands in the same position right in Grayson's hands. Everything depends on his getting it just right so that he needn't lose a second in passing it to the player he chooses to receive it. Now keep at it for a little while till I pick out the others."

He looked the other candidates over with a calculating eye.

"I want a couple of good fast boys for ends," he said, "and I rather think that you, Dillingham, and you, Riley, will fill the bill. I noticed that you were right up in front in those practice runs. Your main work will be to get in motion the instant the ball is kicked and get down to the place where the ball is coming down so as to block the man that gets it when he tries to run it back. You'll have lots else to do, too, but getting down under punts is the thing you mustn't fall down on. Here,

Randolph, you try a few punts and let Riley and Dillingham go after them."

The boys chosen went at the work with an enthusiasm that boded well for the future.

"Now I want some beef," Mr. Phillips said, with a smile. "A couple of husky boys for guards and two more for tackles. I think you'll do, Rowe, for left guard, and you, Hume, will be right guard. It ought to take nothing less than an express train to bowl you over."

There was a general laugh at this, for as has already been stated, Sloppy Hume was built on an elephantine model.

"And you, Snider, and you, Zukor, ought to make good tackles," continued the coach. "Now remember, you four, that you're to be the heavy artillery of the team. You're the fellows who must say, 'They shall not pass!' No matter how hard the other fellows come at you when they're bucking the line, you mustn't let them get through. And on the other hand, when you have the ball and are trying to advance it through their line, go at them like a mad bull. Tear through them, rip them up, plough through them even if half their team is hanging on to you. Every foot, every inch you gain is taking you that much nearer the enemy's goal. I'll teach you how to block. I'll teach you how to tackle. But what you need to develop for yourselves and what you'll need more

than anything else is grit and strength and fighting spirit."

He lined the rest up at a little distance and picked out a few of the heavier boys that had not yet been chosen.

"Now I want you boys," he said to the latter, "to take turns in getting through this line if you can. Do your utmost to get through by hook or by crook. Remember that you can't use your hands. Keep them close to your body and plunge into them with your shoulders—your heads, if you want to."

There were some furious mix-ups for a while, but the boys who had been chosen for guards and tackles held their own in a manner that satisfied the coach he had not gone far wrong in his selections.

"That makes eight," said Mr. Phillips, as he signaled for a breathing spell. "Now for the backs. You, Danter, have long legs. You ought to do well at kicking. Long's big reach should make him good at forward passing. And you, Randolph, are fast. I'll try you three in the backfield and give you your special positions later. You'll have mighty important work to do. You'll have to tackle, to break up interference, to do forward passing, to kick, to run with the ball and dodge in and out in a broken field. I'll give you points in each of these things as we go along. For the present,

take some footballs and practice throwing forward passes. Make them as long and accurate as you can. Grab the ball a little back of the middle and send it through the air end first."

The coach kept them at it, giving suggestions, correcting faults, showing the boys by personal example how the work should be done until they had grasped the rudiments, at least, of what they would be expected to do.

"That will do for to-day," Mr. Phillips said at last, as he looked at his watch. "You boys are soft yet, and I don't want to tire you out. As it is, we've made a pretty fair start. I want you all here to-morrow afternoon, and then I'll pick out a second team. You boys," he added, turning to those who had not been chosen, "ought to have learned a good deal to-day from watching the practice. To-morrow you'll have your chance to tear into this guesswork team and try to take some of the conceit out of them. And remember what I said! You all have a chance to make the first team. All you have to do is to show me!"

CHAPTER VII

Playing the Game

"Now, what do you know about that!" cried Bill Sherwood as soon as he got out of earshot, flinging his cap into the air and doing a wild and impromptu dance in the middle of the road.

"I know it's the greatest thing that ever happened to us!" crowed Nick.

"Think of being chosen for the first team at the first crack out of the box!" exulted Ted.

"I don't mind being a guard, even if Mr. Phillips did rub it in about my couple of pounds extra brawn and muscle," grinned Sloppy Hume.

"Brawn and muscle! Hear him! Where does he get that stuff?" jeered Bill.

" 'Beef' is the way Mr. Phillips pronounced it, Sloppy," laughed Garry.

"And beef you ain't got nothing else but," put in Nick, with a wicked grin.

"Ain't got nothing else!" retorted Sloppy. "Well, now, let me tell you wisecrackers, you may be very glad of my beef some day when

you're trying to buck the line with the pigskin under your arm."

"Sure," agreed Rooster. "All Sloppy has to do is to fall against the opposing team and get a hole big enough for an army to get through."

"If he lets one man through, it will probably be enough," said Garry. "Stop razzing Sloppy, fellows. If we all hold down our jobs as well as I think he will, we'll not have anything to worry about."

"Say, Garry, you're the lucky one," remarked Si Rowe. "Quarterback and captain all at once! Say, Garry, how does it feel to be great?"

"Wish I knew," replied Garry, grinning. "Probably I never shall."

"Well, so far our plans have gone off pretty slick," said Rooster. "Mr. Phillips is a good sort to fall in with our idea of a team."

"And I bet we couldn't have a better coach," Ted interrupted. "He can do everything he wants us to do. Gee, did you see that punt he made?"

"It was sure a pippin," Nick spoke longingly, with a trace of envy in his tone. "If I could ever make a punt like that, I'd die happy."

Many of the boys turned off at the next corner, their companions calling after them part-

ing injunctions to be sure to be on the field the next afternoon. This was wholly unnecessary, for it was safe to say there would not be one of them that would not try to beat the others to the practice field as soon as the next day's lessons left them free for football.

Bill Sherwood and Sloppy Hume went on for a short distance with Garry, Ted and Nick.

"Wasn't it lucky that all of us were picked out for the first team?" chortled Ted. "I can't believe it yet."

"Don't let your joy run away with you," advised Nick. "You may not be on the first team long."

"Listen to the gloom hound!" cried Ted. "I bet I'll stick on it as long as you will."

"We've all of us got to fight to hold our jobs," put in Garry. "Probably Mr. Phillips will pick out the strongest scrub team he can get hold of. You know yourselves that the second team of a school sometimes gets almost as strong as the first, and sometimes there are special players on the scrubs that can put it all over the regulars. That's what we've got to look out for, and perhaps it isn't going to be easy to keep our places."

"I'd like to see any one else get my job!" Ted's jaw shot out pugnaciously. "Just let 'em try it—that's all!"

It was just that sort of spirit that Mr. Phil-

lips was trying to develop in the boys. And for that reason he was bound, as Garry had said, to pick as strong a scrub team as he could from the eager applicants. For, as he himself had reason to know, there was nothing like a good scrub team crowding hard on the heels of the first to keep the regulars on their mettle and develop first-class players.

It was at the dinner table that night that Garry told of his good fortune. His mother had been out when he had come in, bursting with the news, and Ella had been spending the afternoon with Jane Danter, Nick's sister.

It was his twin sister who opened fire on Garry as soon as the soup was served.

"Hear you've been chosen captain of the new team, Garry." Her eyes were merry as they glanced across the table at her twin. "Nick brought us the good news and Jane said—well, I guess I'd better not tell you what Jane said."

"Maybe you'd better not," said Garry, at which Ella made a face.

"Well, then, just for that I will. She said she guessed you must be the teacher's pet."

"Ella, hush!" Mrs. Grayson turned to Garry. "Is that right, Garry? Did they choose you for captain?"

"Better than that." Try as he would, Garry

could not keep the pride out of his voice. "Mr. Phillips picked me as quarterback."

Mr. Grayson looked at his son with interest, and for the moment forgot his soup.

"Picked you for quarter, did he? Well, son, that's fine. Bully for you!"

"Oh, well, it isn't much of an honor yet, you know," said Garry modestly. "Mr. Phillips picked us almost at random—"

"You had a tryout, didn't you?" his father queried.

"Oh, yes! We ran and threw and kicked the ball about some. But Mr. Phillips said himself the team might be only temporary, a sort of guesswork thing—"

"That's the reason they let Garry in," murmured Ella, but when Garry sent her a frowning glance the girl was demurely intent on a spoonful of soup.

"He'll pick a good second team," Garry continued, secure in the knowledge that he had two good listeners, at least, in his father and mother. "Then we fellows will have to look out that some of the scrubs don't steal our places."

"That all sounds pretty good, son," said Mr. Grayson. "The quarterback is the brains of the team, and if Mr. Phillips has picked you for that position, he must have confidence in

you. Now all you have to do is to show him how right he is to depend on you."

"Sounds like a pretty big order to me," replied Garry. "But you can bet your life I'm going to do my best."

The next afternoon was all too slow in coming. Lessons dragged and the boys most interested in football fretted and fumed until the gong rang and gave them their freedom for the rest of the day.

The members of the first team were on the ground earliest, but it was not long before the applicants for second honors appeared, followed by a crowd of other students eager to watch their more fortunate comrades "do their stuff."

"Now, boys," Mr. Phillips said to the first eleven, as they lined up expectantly before him, "I'm going to set you to work at group practice while I pick out the boys for the second team. You've got a lot to learn, and the sooner you start the better. First we'll do some work at blocking."

He glanced over the group.

"You, Hume, Grayson, and Danter, can work in the first bunch. Zukor, Dillingham and Snider can try out in the second. Sherwood, Rowe and Riley come over here. You, Randolph, and you, Long, go ahead and practice punts. Put plenty of pep in your kicks, and

remember always to punt with the top of the foot and not the toes. Now go ahead and show what you can do."

Leaving Dick and Rooster thus engaged, the coach drew the others over to one side.

"I'm going to show you a few of the more common methods of blocking," he told them. "Grayson, suppose you have the ball. Here it is. Hold it now close to your body—that's it—with your hand beneath it, right in the crook of your arm. Now you have a hold on it that's mighty hard to break.

"Hume, come here. I'm going to show you the shoulder block. You come at the runner in a crouching position and try to catch him with your head and shoulders below the waist and as near the knees as possible.

"Grayson, suppose you're running with the ball and Hume is running with you and a little in advance of you as your guard and interference. Danter is in the defensive team. He's out for blood and the ball. He is as determined to stop you and bring the ball to earth as you are determined to carry it another five yards toward his goal line.

"Now, Hume, this is where you come in. It's your business not to let Danter get to Grayson for a tackle. It's up to you to block Danter, whatever happens, and secure an open field for your teammate.

"All right, Grayson, show your speed. Hume, work as you never worked before. Danter, at 'em! You're going to get to Grayson and that ball if you have to plough through a dozen boys. Now, Hume, right at 'em—head low, shoulders hunched, arms close at your sides. He's dodging you—good, Danter! Charge him, Hume! Don't let him reach Grayson. That's right, below the knees—all your beef behind that shove—hold him, hold him—down him—"

While the nimble Danter tried to dodge the lumbering form of Sloppy Hume and get at the ball carrier, Garry ran across the field, the precious pigskin held close in the crook of his arm.

Sloppy, blowing and grunting, made a desperate effort and flung himself at Nick, with all the strength of his heavy shoulders square across the knees.

The force of that blow was tremendous. Nick went down as though he had been felled by a club!

CHAPTER VIII

A Lively Tussle

The boys were shouting themselves hoarse. It was their first taste of body to body struggle on the home field, and having tasted blood they thirsted for more.

Nick picked himself up out of the dirt and looked at his antagonist with new respect.

"Say, Sloppy, old boy, you sure do pack a mean wallop," he said, with unfeigned admiration.

"Not so bad, not so bad," acknowledged Sloppy, grinning.

But Mr. Phillips's first remark took some of the newborn conceit out of him.

"Not such a bad block," remarked the teacher, when he had once more gathered the boys about him, "only you didn't get there fast enough, Hume."

"Gee, Mr. Phillips, I almost got to him half a dozen times, but he's as fast as a locomotive and as slippery as an eel."

"Yes, but it's up to you to get him and get him quickly, slippery or not," declared the

coach, and Sloppy, who had begun to swell with pride, looked a little crestfallen.

"How about the blocking itself, Mr. Phillips?" asked Garry, as he pressed forward, the football still held snugly under his arm. "Was that all right?"

"Pretty good," admitted the coach. "Hume got Danter near the knees, and if ever I saw a pile driver shove, that was it."

"You're right it was," put in Nick, and ruefully rubbed his back while the boys chortled in glee.

"But you almost spoiled it, Hume, by using your hands," went on Mr. Phillips. "That is not only against the rules, but it carries a penalty as well."

"Gee!" Sloppy's round, good-natured face again grew long with chagrin. "What kind of a penalty, Mr. Phillips?"

"A pretty big penalty," was the answer, while the coach's eyes twinkled. "Fifteen yards of hard-won ground lost by the boy who uses his arms or hands in blocking."

"Fifteen yards!" exclaimed Ted, with a whistle. "That's a pretty big penalty for a little slip, it seems to me."

"You said it," affirmed Rooster. "Guess we fellows had better use skid chains while we're learning."

"But the defensive team can use their hands in tackling, can't they?" asked Garry.

"Only when they're trying to get at the man with the ball," explained Mr. Phillips. "But tackling is an art in itself," he added. "We'll have to get in a lot of good practice on that later. Just now our main business is to learn the various kinds of blocking and put them in practice.

"Now, fellows," he said, as he turned to the other groups of three that he had organized, "you have seen what is meant by the shoulder block. Suppose you get in some practice on that. One of you can be on the defensive team as tackle. The other two work together to block this fellow, who is presumably nearest the boy with the ball. Go to it now and put some pep into it. Remember you've made up your mind to do what you've set out to do, no matter what the odds are against you. All right—get busy."

The coach watched the boys for a few minutes, pointing out faults in posture and approach until he was satisfied that they were started on a good half hour of fruitful practice. Then he went over to the fullback and left halfback to see how they were getting on with the punting.

Rooster Long, who was tall for his age and as nimble on his feet as a cat, was punting

pretty accurately, although Mr. Phillips found much to criticise.

"You've got the ball sailing too high, Long," he said, after he had stood back and watched several punts. "A high ball is good only if it's fast as well. Your ball is high but not fast. While it is dropping lazily downward the opposing team has plenty of time to judge where it will land and to plan their play. Here, let me show you what I mean."

He took the ball from Rooster's hands and kicked a punt that was marvelously fast considering the height at which it was traveling.

The boys followed the flight of the pigskin with sighs of envious admiration. Rooster turned to the teacher with a rueful grin on his face.

"Do you suppose if I practiced for the next hundred years I'd be able to make a punt like that?" he asked.

"It won't take a hundred years," laughed Mr. Phillips. "Now watch while I explain the trick behind that kick. I've watched you, Long, and the trouble with you is that you don't follow through. You kick with your foot but not with the rest of your body."

"I suppose you mean I ought to put all my weight behind the kick," said Rooster.

"Exactly. That way you get the speed that you lack now. Let's try again and see if you

get the idea. And remember—always keep your eye steadily on the ball until it has left your foot. Watch the ball. Stare at it."

Fired with enthusiasm, Rooster earnestly tried to follow instructions.

He stared steadily at the pigskin, opened his hands for the drop, caught the ball squarely on the top of his foot near the instep and "followed through" with all the strength of his body.

"That wasn't as high as some of my other punts, but it went a good deal faster," said Rooster, hands on hips.

"Listen to the rooster crow," called some wag from the side lines, and everybody laughed, including Rooster himself.

"That was pretty good," admitted Mr. Phillips. "You've got the right idea, and now all you've got to do is to keep on putting it into practice. Of course the aim of every punter is the high, fast punt. But just now we'll be satisfied with the moderately high punt that has plenty of muscle behind it and can travel.

"Well, Randolph," he went on, turning to the shorter, stockier lad, "how about you?"

Dick was not giving quite as good an account of himself as Rooster. His play was erratic and uncertain. When he hit the ball, it traveled, but then, as the same wag from the sidelines called out, he very seldom hit it.

"Trouble with you, Randolph, is that you don't keep your eye on the ball," remarked Mr. Phillips, always speaking in the kind, encouraging way the boys found so helpful at this stage of their progress. "You look up always just as your foot is about to kick the ball. Then it doesn't connect at all, or the ball hits it too far up on the instep and slides off to one side. Then, too, you let the ball get too close to the ground before you swing at it. Try catching it with your foot a good two feet from the ground and watch the ball. Now, ready."

Dick tried again and—failed!

Dick tried again and this time did better.

Mr. Phillips stayed with him until he was sure that Dick had corrected the most glaring of his faults. Then, leaving the first team to its practice, he went on with the very important work of selecting members of the scrub team.

There were about eighteen boys left who were eager to prove their ability to represent the school. These Mr. Phillips put through their paces, eyeing them keenly in his search for the right material. Before they had finished punting, scrimmaging, and running, the teacher's forehead wore a puzzled frown.

Almost all the applicants were light. Most of them were fast runners. A number of them were good kickers. But there were only two

heavyweights among them, and in a line scrimmage weight often wins the day.

The only two who could fill this need were Chatwood Johns and Glenn Warding—the latter more commonly known among the boys as "Bud."

These two, who were inseparable companions, were not popular among the other lads of the school, and they were even less in favor with the faculty.

Still, they seemed to be earnest enough in their desire to play on the team, and perhaps, the teacher thought, they might, if given a chance to play, develop a latent good sportsmanship that would make different boys of them. Then, too, if he were going to give his first-string boys good practice, it would be necessary to have a couple of heavy players on the opposing team—some one to face Sloppy Hume and big Bill Sherwood.

The coach shrugged and his lips tightened. He had made up his mind.

"Come closer, fellows," he called. "I'm going to pick out the scrubs."

CHAPTER IX

The Bully Meets Disaster

At the coach's call the boys gathered from all parts of the field.

The first-string players also stopped blocking and tackling and surrounded the teacher, anxious to hear his decision.

The applicants for the scrub team gathered in a tense group, trying not to look excited or over-anxious.

"You fellows do pretty well," Mr. Phillips told them. "Your running is good, Tracy," he went on, turning to a lean, rangy youth, "and for that reason, among others, I'm going to pick you for the backfield—left half."

Envious eyes were turned on Dub Tracy, who grinned his satisfaction.

"Graham will do well at center, I think," Mr. Phillips continued slowly. He hesitated, then corrected himself. "No, I think I'll put Johns in for center, Graham, and make you left guard."

There was a murmur at this among the boys. They had welcomed the appointment of Pudge

Graham to the center position and were ready to acclaim the choice. They liked Pudge. He was good-natured, full of jokes, and a good sport in every kind of game. The boys liked him as heartily as they disliked Chat Johns.

Mr. Phillips caught the almost inaudible murmur of dissatisfaction and condescended to explain.

"Johns is about the heaviest of you volunteers, and so, I think, is the best fitted, perhaps, to lead your linesmen in bucking the opposing team. These positions are only temporary, you mustn't forget that, and you boys will have to fight to retain them," he reminded them. "Now let's go on."

The dissatisfied murmur died out as the boys waited eagerly for the announcement of the rest of the lineup.

"Johnson, you're good at figures," continued the teacher, with a smile for the stocky, flushed boy who came forward at mention of his name. "I'm going to give you a chance as quarterback."

"Oh, gee, Mr. Phillips, thanks! That's pretty slick—" Here Tom Johnson became confused, seeing all eyes fixed upon him, and he sheepishly retired to the background amid the good-natured gibes of his friends.

"Tom Johnson as quarter! That's a pretty

good pick, anyway," said Nick, who was standing at Garry's elbow.

"You said it," Garry returned. "Looks like a good team so far, with the exception of Chat Johns at center. Listen! He's picked Bud Warding for right guard."

This time the murmur of dissatisfaction was so audible that Mr. Phillips was forced to pause and regard the boys frowningly before order was restored.

"If I'm going to act as coach to you boys," he said quietly, "you must make up your minds to abide by my decision, whether it suits you or not. If you aren't willing to do this, I'm afraid you'll have to look for some one else to help you."

At this dire threat all opposition died away as though by magic. The boys knew of no one else among the faculty of the school who was qualified to help them in this matter. Besides, they liked the teacher of English thoroughly and had faith in his judgment. So he was bombarded with a chorus of placating assurances from the boys.

"Sorry, Mr. Phillips!"

"What you say goes!"

"We were only fooling. It's up to you to pick the players."

"We're only too glad to have you help us."

These and a host of similar exclamations

banished the frown from Mr. Phillips's face, and he went briskly about the rest of the business.

"You, Craig, and Connelly, I'm going to pick for right and left tackle. You look as though you had brawn enough to stand your ground when you have to, and you're both pretty swift in sprinting.

"Now for the ends. I think Powell and Bradley will do." The two boys mentioned started and then grinned joyfully. "You both know how to use your legs," the teacher continued. "With some intensive practice at blocking and tackling you ought to make pretty good ends. We'll put you down for right end, Powell, and you, Bradley, for left."

There was subdued applause from the boys, for both Jim Bradley and Dick Powell were favorites with their schoolmates, and even those who were left out were glad that these two were to have their chance.

"Now we've got our linesmen pretty well settled," Mr. Phillips went on. "But our backfield remains. Let's see, we have Tracy at left half. Now for the right half and full."

Since the boys knew that the backfield positions were as important as any on the team and more important than most, they held their breath as they awaited Mr. Phillips's choice. Those of the aspirants who had not yet been

chosen fidgeted, alternately hoping and fearing, while at the same time they kept their eyes intently on the coach.

Two more positions left. Who would get them?

Mr. Phillips hesitated, and then turned to those boys whose names had not yet been mentioned among the lucky ones.

"It's hard to make any intelligent choice just now," he said slowly. "Chances are that most of you would do good work if you were given the opportunity. I'm going to choose two of you, but the others must remember that they still have a chance to make the team if anybody falls down on his part."

He turned to Frank Nolan, a good-looking, sturdy lad, who was of about Nick Danter's height and build.

"I noticed that you did pretty good work with the ball just now, Nolan. You put muscle behind your punt, and the ball has speed. I'm going to give you a chance at right half.

"And you, Trainor," he said, turning from Nolan, who fell back among his companions to be joyfully mauled and pummeled, "I'm going to make fullback. You realize that this is an important position and you'll have to work hard to hold it.

"Now, boys, suppose we have a lineup and see just what our scrub team looks like."

There was a cheer from the onlookers as the newly appointed members of the second team proudly took their places.

"Not so bad," commented Garry critically, as his eyes traveled from one to the other of the fellows who from this time on were destined to be the "friendly enemies" of the first-string boys. "Not bad at all."

"You said a mouthful!" exclaimed Ted approvingly. He had come up from the rear and was standing beside Garry. "But we'll have to work to keep our jobs from those fellows."

"So much the better," maintained Garry. "We don't want a second team that we won't have to fight."

"The only thing I don't like about it is having Chat Johns and Bud Warding on the scrubs," said Nick Danter, with a frown. "You know what those fellows are. They're bullies, always making life miserable for boys smaller than they are. They're mean and tricky. I don't see where it's going to help the good name of the school to have them on the football team."

"They're only on the scrub, you know," Garry pointed out, loyal to the coach, though he liked Chat and Bud no better than his chums did. "I suppose Mr. Phillips picked them for their weight. Without them the team would be

pretty light, and we could walk all over them. You can see that for yourself."

"That's all very well," returned Nick doggedly. "But I don't like 'em, and I'm willing to bet we'll be mighty sorry they ever got a chance at the team before we get through."

The boys had no more chance for conversation, critical or otherwise.

Mr. Phillips scattered them over the field again for more group practice, and before he was through with them they ached in every joint and muscle and were perfectly willing to call it a day.

Tired but happy, they gathered together in the center of the field to get the last instructions of their coach.

"We'll have some practice every afternoon for the rest of the week," Mr. Phillips told them. "By Saturday we ought to be ready for the first regular game between our two teams. Then we'll be able to see how evenly matched you are and whether you boys really belong on the first or the second. Go on home now and get to bed early. You'll need plenty of sleep to be in shape to practice to-morrow afternoon."

There were few happier boys than these lads of the Hill Street School as they traveled rather stiffly homeward that day. They were sore and aching from their strenuous running

and scrimmaging, but they cherished their bruises fondly.

They felt that they were beginning to know football, not from the outside but from the inside where knowledge counts. They were beginning to understand a few of the technical points of the game, and their enthusiasm and confidence soared.

"I bet it won't be as long as we thought before we're able to send our challenges to Cherry and Webster Streets," prophesied Nick, as he fondled Garry's football. "Seems to me the boys worked out mighty well to-day."

"And, say! did you see that last punt Dick Randolph made?" asked Ted. "Even Mr. Phillips was surprised. I'll tell the world that boy's not bad."

"Punting's all right as far as it goes, but what that punk team of yours needs is beef."

The words were spoken condescendingly, and the boys whirled about, to find Chat Johns and Bud Warding close behind them.

"Oh, so we need more beef, do we?" said Garry, turning red. "What's the matter with Sloppy Hume and Bill Sherwood?"

"Those two guys!" returned Chat contemptuously. "I could push 'em over with my little finger."

"You may not be a nut, but you sure talk like one!" exclaimed Ted, firing up.

"He talks like a bushel of them," amplified Garry. "Leave him alone, Ted. Let him spout."

"Oh, iz zhat so?" Chat came forward in a crouching attitude with fist clenched. "Talk like a bushel of nuts, do I? Just spouting, am I? Take that back or I'll knock your head off."

He was much the biggest boy there, but Garry did not flinch.

"You commenced it," he retorted. "You said our team was punk. I won't take anything back."

Chat aimed a blow at him. Garry dodged and came back with a well-aimed blow to the jaw. Chat staggered, slipped, tried to regain his balance, and then fell with a loud plop into a mud hole!

CHAPTER X

Foul Tactics

"Whoopee! Bully for you, Garry! That was a peach of an uppercut! Do it again!"

Ted was dancing wildly on the edge of the mud hole into which Garry had pitched the bully.

Bud Warding was edging slowly forward, but Nick turned on him with a fierceness that temporarily checked his advance.

"You want a mud bath too, do you?" asked Nick. "All right. Come on and I'll give it to you."

But Bud evidently thought it wise to remain where he was, and he let his ugly eyes say what he feared to say with his fists.

Chat meanwhile was in a sorry plight. Garry had not meant to knock him into the hole, which he had not noticed. The sight of Chat covered with wet, slimy clay was so ludicrous as to send Ted into spasms of glee.

The laughter maddened Chat, and he floundered out of the hole, wild with rage. He was crazy to get at Garry, and there would have

been a pitched battle right there in the street if Mr. Phillips had not chanced to come along.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, looking gravely from one to the other of the boys. "What's all this?"

"Grayson struck me, Mr. Phillips," cried Chat, trembling with fury. "He hit me and knocked me into that mud hole. Ask Bud if that isn't so."

Bud, assured by the presence of the teacher, nodded assent.

"We were just walking along, Mr. Phillips," he said, "and Garry got mad and hit Chat in the jaw."

"You low-down—" Nick was beginning furiously, when the teacher held up his hand.

"Wait a minute, Danter," he said. "I don't understand this. Garry, suppose you give me your version of the story."

Garry hesitated, looked down at the sidewalk and then met Mr. Phillips's grave gaze steadily.

"I don't like to say anything, Mr. Phillips," he said. "Chat and I were having an argument, that's all."

"So I see." The teacher's eyes twinkled, though his voice was still grave. "But if I were you, I think I'd try to have as few such arguments as possible. We want to have a spirit of friendly rivalry between members of

the two teams, and we can hardly do it by indulging in this sort of thing."

"But, Mr. Phillips, it wasn't Garry's fault," Ted broke in hotly. "Bud and Chat started the thing. Chat aimed the first blow at Garry and Garry struck back, that's all."

Mr. Phillips studied the boys' faces. He could see from Chat's silence that the latter could not deny Ted's statement. The bully averted his eyes and tried sullenly to brush some of the mud from his clothing.

"Starting a fight is one thing and self defense is another," Mr. Phillips said. "I'm glad to see, Grayson, that you are reluctant to give another boy away even to justify yourself. That's a mighty good trait, my boy. Hang on to it."

He turned to the scowling Chat.

"As for you, Johns," he said, "I'd advise you to play square in all your dealings. Don't start trouble. Good sportsmanship is a very essential quality in any one who wants to play football. It's up to every individual member of a team to remember that. Go on home now, boys, and behave yourselves."

For the next two days the boys practiced beneath the hawk eyes and the expert direction of Mr. Phillips. For the most part the teacher kept them to group practice, learning to block and tackle, to punt, drop kick, and place kick.

But several times he lined the teams up against each other and went through the motions of a game, carefully explaining each play to them and patiently correcting their faults.

Garry had worked out an ingenious set of signals with the aid of the coach, and was developing a fine driving art and field generalship that kept his team on their toes and inspired them to their best efforts. He was as quick with his arms and legs as he was with his head. And he not only directed the plays but got into them at times, with results fruitful for the regulars and demoralizing to the scrubs.

His teammates were becoming fairly skilful at mass plays, though in this particular the first string boys had little, if any, advantage over the scrubs.

Mr. Phillips was a bit puzzled over this. It seemed to him that Garry was quicker with his signals, that his comrades grasped them better and that the general work of the first team's linesmen was superior to that of the second's. He had seen nothing yet that made him think he had made a mistake in picking out his regulars.

Yet when it came to a straight mass play, it was almost always the first team that gave ground.

Garry and his mates could have explained this mystery, had they been so inclined; but

they were reluctant to carry complaints to the teacher and contented themselves for the time with warning Chat Johns and Bud Warding to "lay off the rough stuff."

The bullies had abated nothing of their enmity, though they were careful to do their work as far as possible under cover. But whenever the coach's attention was diverted for a moment they had no hesitation in "giving the knee" slugging, or indulging in any other foul tactics that regulars would have scorned to do. When remonstrated with, they only sneered and kept on.

Meanwhile the first team was developing a strong backfield.

Rooster's punts were "a thing of beauty and a joy forever," as Bill Sherwood intoned in a high falsetto voice on numerous occasions. He did consistently good work, and proved that he could keep cool and punt accurately when the enemy's line was bearing down upon him. There was no doubt that the fullback's position was in capable hands.

Dick Randolph at left half was not quite as dependable, but he was developing a mighty kick that sent the ball soaring far toward his opponents' goal line.

Nick at right half was doing fine work in catching and running. Those long legs of his carried him over the field with remarkable

speed. He could judge almost to an inch where the ball was coming down, would welcome it lovingly, tuck it in the crotch of his arm and be down the field like a frightened jackrabbit.

Ted Dillingham at right end was developing into a fast and heady player, and on more than one occasion earned the approval of Mr. Phillips for the quality of his work.

So matters stood when the Saturday came on which the first real game was to be played between the regulars and the scrubs.

The second team had been making a good showing in practice, and it was evident to the first string boys that they might have a hard struggle to prove their superiority.

The day was bright and sunshiny, and the members of both teams were in high feather, though all had a bit of stage fright when they saw what a big crowd of boys had assembled to witness the game. Practically all the Hill Street schoolboys were there, and there was a large representation of boys from other schools. Most of the Cherry Street and Webster Street boys, however, had come to have a good laugh. It would be lots of fun, they told themselves, to see these Hill Street "dubs" fumble the ball and make a mess of things in general.

Though no challenge had yet been sent, it had leaked out in the way those things will that

Hill Street had the presumption to intend to tackle their more experienced rivals. There had been much snickering in consequence.

"Was Hill Street crazy? Didn't it know that it hadn't a chance on earth? Oh, well, if it really wanted a spanking, Cherry Street and Webster Street would give it to them good and plenty."

But if Hill Street was to be made the laughing stock of the town, it did not seem to know it. Expectation and enthusiasm ran high, and as each player, whether of the regulars or the scrubs, came on the field he was greeted by a chorus of shouts from the eager Hill Street rooters.

The captain got an especially uproarious reception.

"Garry Grayson!" came a yell from the crowd. "Yea, quarter! Yea, captain! Go to it, Garry! Show your stuff! Eat 'em up!"

CHAPTER XI

Bucking the Line

It was easy to see that Garry Grayson, as captain and quarterback, was the hero of the Hill Street fans and that they were pinning their hopes on him to make a good showing.

The boys ran to the locker rooms in the gymnasium, where in a short time all had assembled.

It was the first day that members of both teams were to play in full uniform. Orders had been sent to a well known sporting goods house for the suits and shoes required, and the order, marked "rush," had been delivered the day before.

"Gee, we'll feel like regular players now!" said Ted, as he strutted proudly about the gymnasium, garbed as became a member of Hill Street's first string.

"Even if we ain't," grinned Nick. "Who was that guy that said clothes don't make the man?"

"And I don't think a uniform can make a good football player out of a dub," laughed Garry.

"Well, maybe you kids are right," replied Ted. "But I'm willing to make a bet right now that I can kick the pigskin at least a good ten yards further than I could when I had my street clothes on."

"Look at the cleats on these shoes," said Rooster, holding a foot up for inspection. "See the grip they give you on the ground. Oughtn't to be much slipping, even on a muddy field."

"And these shoulder pads aren't bad when you're blocking a husky," declared Carl.

"The helmets, too, are going to save us many a hard bump," remarked Bill. "To say nothing of keeping your ears from being torn off when you're bucking the line," he added.

"Now listen, gang!" Garry, ready for the field, drew the members of his team about him. He spoke in a low tone so that no member of the second team might hear. "Let's be sure we've got our signals straight before we go on the field."

"You said it, cap!" remarked Sizz Snider, who was not as quick with his wits as he was with his legs. "Those numbers buzz about in my head like so many bees, and they're just about as comfortable."

There was a chuckle at this.

"Sure," agreed big Bill Sherwood. "By the

time Sizz finds out what it's all about the play's over."

Sizz made a pass at Bill, which the latter dodged adroitly. Garry grinned and went on to emphasize their system of signals.

"Remember all the odd numbers under ten mean a play to the left end—all the even numbers mean a play to the right. I guess you all know the play that is meant by each number."

"Sure ding, Garry," said Carl Zukor impatiently. "We got heads for heads not bumpkins." Carl's people were German and the lad often spoke with an accent.

There was a general laugh, but Garry went on quickly:

"Listen, fellows. We haven't any time for kidding. We've got to get those numbers down fine or the whole team's going to be bumped for a row of goals. Get your own number, so you won't have to think twice when it's called. Then remember the first two numbers will be blind, the third means the player, the fourth the play, the fifth the direction of the play."

"A little signal drill, Grayson?" asked Mr. Phillips, coming up behind the intent group of boys. "That's good! You can't do too much of it. But now it's time to go on the field. How about it? Are you ready?"

The members of the team answered enthusiastically in the affirmative and crowded out

after their teacher into the bright sunlight of the field.

The scrubs were kicking the ball about and looking chesty and sure of themselves in their new uniforms. Chat and Bud were strutting around importantly.

"They think they own the team and the field too," grumbled Nick. "I tell you, Garry, if you stand for any of their funny work to-day, you're softer than I take you to be."

"Don't worry," Garry assured him, his lips tightening. "If they're looking for trouble, they'll get it all right. This is different from just practice on the field, and if they don't keep to the rules, they'll get all that's coming to them."

"Attaboy!" Nick brought his hand down in a hearty slap on his friend's shoulder. "Go out after them, Garry. You're the boy to do it."

A burst of cheering greeted the appearance of the first team. All the loyalty of the school was aroused by the sight of their representatives in their natty uniforms. It was Hill Street's first eleven, the eleven that they hoped would put it over Cherry Street and Webster Street. Any one who would have ventured to say they had not a chance would have met with short shrift from that crowd.

The wild applause from the spectators was inspiring.

"We've got the school with us," Garry said to his team. "Now, fellows, let's get busy and show them a little speed."

"You said it, Garry!" answered Bill. "When we get through with these poor little scrubs they won't know that they ever were a team."

After a little preliminary practice in falling on the ball, the two teams lined up, and Mr. Phillips took his place as referee.

A coin was tossed and the choice of play fell to the scrubs.

They chose to kick off, and the first string boys set themselves to receive the ball.

Chat Johns prepared to kick. He looked important and posed until the fans in the crowd grew impatient and Johnson at quarter said crisply:

"Don't take all day, Chat. If you can't kick it, we'll give the job to some one who can."

With a scowl, Chat drew back his leg and kicked.

Either he was nervous or was over-confident, and he got the ball off badly. It sailed lazily over the heads of the linesmen and came to rest in Rooster's arms on the first team's thirty-five yard line.

There was a whoop of derision from the

spectators, and the scowl on Chat's face deepened. He became furiously angry, and from that moment lost what little sense of sportsmanship he had ever had.

Rooster was off like a flash and carried the ball ten yards back before he was downed.

The first string men were now on the offensive. Garry sent Carl through the line for three yards on the first down. On the second the net gain was only two. The scrubs were holding strongly, helped by a bit of surreptitious slugging on the part of Chat and Bud. On the third attempt the regulars were thrown back with the loss of a yard.

With six yards to make on the fourth down Garry decided on an end play. He gave a quick glance to see that his mates were in position, and then in a crisp, clear voice gave the signal:

"5-14-12-8-10."

The ball snapped back at him from Bill at center.

Garry straightened and flung it to Nick at right half.

Nick, on his toes, tucked the ball in his arm and started to run.

The line men spread out, Ted, Sizz Snider and Si Rowe flying before the lad with the ball. They braced to meet the attack of the de-

fenders, who were charging down upon them, heads bent.

On the side lines the spectators were wild with excitement.

"Go it, Nick! Go it, you guy! Rip into 'em! Don't let 'em stop you."

Interference and defense crashed together and went down in a mass of waving arms and legs.

Nick was still legging it when Connelly of the scrubs threw himself directly in the path of the runner.

Si Rowe, who had gone over the head of a tackler and stretched his length on the ground, saw the danger and struggled to his feet.

Too late!

Nick dodged, but Connelly was too quick for him. Before Rowe could reach them and interpose his shoulder block, Connelly had wound his arms around Nick's legs and held on grimly.

Even then Nick plunged forward for another two yards, but was finally brought to earth on the scrubs' twenty-five yard line.

Rounds of frantic applause went up from the crowd at Nick's gallant run. If it had been a championship game, they could have been scarcely more excited.

Flushed with pleasure Nick took his place while his mates lined up for another attack.

The scrubs looked determined, though none

of them showed scowls on their faces but Chat and Bud.

"Those fellows have got it in for us," thought Garry. "When they get the ball we'd better look out for dirty work."

He passed the ball to Dick, who bored through the line for a gain of five yards, the scrubs being still a little flustered from that long run of Nick's.

Second down and five yards to go!

"Sounds easy," thought Garry, and decided to have Bill and Sloppy make a hole for him while he himself carried the ball.

He gave the signals, kept the ball to himself as it was snapped back to him, and then, as Bill and Sloppy tore a hole between center and guard, lowered his head and plunged through.

CHAPTER XII

Making a Touchdown

The movements had been perfectly timed, and why what should have been a successful play proved so disastrous probably only the players could tell—especially Garry, whose nose was bleeding, and possibly Mr. Phillips, who was watching the play intently and with a curious expression on his face.

For some reason Sloppy and Bill only made a dent in the enemy's line.

Garry, denied an opening, was tackled on all sides and forced back a good eight yards, losing not only the five yards gained on the first down but three additional yards as well.

Third down and thirteen yards to go!

"Those crooks!" Sloppy Hume growled, as the team lined up for the next play. "Bud Warding had hold of my ear with his teeth. If you don't report 'em, Garry, I'm going to, that's all."

"Give 'em enough rope and they'll hang themselves," replied Garry. "Chat caught me with his fist in the nose just as I was starting.

But I think Mr. Phillips saw that, and by the end of the game he'll know just as much about those rotten eggs as we do."

"Yeah," growled Sloppy, "after one of us has lost an ear or had an eye gouged out."

"Play ball!" called Mr. Phillips sharply. "Third down and thirteen yards to go."

Again Garry called on Nick's long legs and was not disappointed. Nick made eight yards before he was brought to earth.

Fourth down and five yards to go! The same position they had held at the end of the second down.

Garry could do one of three things on that last chance, either try another run or a forward pass or another mass play. Experience had taught him the danger of the latter against boys who paid no more attention to the rules than Chat Johns and Bud Warding did.

He gave his signals slowly and carefully, so that his mates might get the full significance of them.

The ball snapped back to him. Garry made a feint of passing it to Rooster. At once the scrubs' defense started on a run to intercept him. Then, with the ball snugly tucked in his arm, Garry darted round the other end and legged it at full speed down an almost unobstructed field.

Garry heard the yells from the side lines,

saw at a glance that his faithful interference was on the job and was running with him, saw several boys break from the line of the defending team and start hotly in pursuit. Then Garry looked behind him no more, but fixed his eyes on the enemy's goal and ran as though pursued by savages.

He could have laughed with joy. The goal was his and he knew it. With his head start no one could overtake him before he had pushed the ball over the goal line for a touchdown.

Fifteen yards! Ten! Garry's heart was pounding.

The goal line was just ahead of him.

He heard a pounding of feet, felt rather than saw that Frank Nolan was close on his heels.

With one last great effort he flung himself forward, and fell with the ball beneath him just over the line.

The first score of the game had been made, and in favor of the regulars!

As Garry got to his feet, breathless and triumphant, the referee's whistle blew for the end of the first quarter.

Garry was a hero then if he had not been before, not only with the fans but with the rest of his team as well. Even some members of the scrub, though sore, could appreciate the play.

"Gee, Garry, I didn't think that anything

but an ostrich could run like that," grinned Frank Nolan. "I think you must have had a pair of wings fitted into that uniform of yours."

"You're not so slow on the old pins yourself," said Garry, with an answering grin. "You almost had me there at the end."

"It wasn't only Garry's running that gave him the touchdown," Mr. Phillips broke in at this point. "It was partly your own carelessness in leaving the backfield undefended."

"But, Mr. Phillips," protested Tom Johnson, "we all thought that Garry was passing the ball to Rooster for an end run."

"I know that's what Garry pretended," replied the teacher, with a smile. "And I must say he managed the trick well. But it might not have been so successful against more experienced players. That's what you've got to learn and what experience alone will teach you," he added, as the scrubs looked a little sheepish. "You've got to learn to look out for every kind of play and be ready to block it."

"I guess that takes more brains than I've got," admitted Tom, with a rueful grin. "You've got to be a sort of mind reader, I guess."

"Not so much a mind reader as a quick thinker and quicker actor," returned their coach, who had confidence in the scrubs' quar-

terback and believed the makings of a good player were in him. "You can't expect to learn everything at once, of course. But I can tell you this much. As long as Garry can play tricks of that sort on you you can stake your life he's going to do it. Remember, he's trying to fool you all the time. That's what he's there for. It's up to him to do just what you don't expect him to do. It's his wits against yours. You've got to try to outguess him."

"But he's afraid to try regular mass plays," growled Chat Johns, to whom praise of Garry was gall and wormwood. "Anybody can dodge and run around the end with the ball if his legs are long enough. But it takes real strength to buck the line."

"Sure," added Bud Warding. "Why doesn't he line up his team man to man and then go to it? We'd mighty soon see who had the best team."

There was a growl of protest from the first string boys.

"You're fine ones to talk, you big stiffs," Ted broke out hotly.

Mr. Phillips interrupted sternly.

"We'll save all this till after the game," he said. "But this much I will say now to you boys," he added, turning to Chat and Bud. "That is that you'd better be careful how you

use your arms in tackling, except when you tackle the boy with the ball."

"We don't use our hands," muttered Chat, but the teacher interrupted him sharply.

"Don't tell me I can't see," he said crisply. "I've seen you use your hands, and, what is more, your fists. Very little you do gets by me."

The delighted grins on the faces of the other boys did not sweeten the tempers of the two bullies. They stood scuffing their toes in the dirt of the field, eyes sullenly on the ground.

"I haven't been too severe with you," Mr. Phillips went on in a milder tone, "because I knew you were new at the game, and I thought perhaps the rules hadn't had time to sink in. I can overlook some trifling things done in a moment of excitement. But the minute I begin to suspect—" the words were spoken quietly, but there was that in the teacher's voice that forced the bullies to look up and meet his eyes—"that you are deliberately and systematically trying to get away with foul play, that moment not only you but your team will suffer the full penalty."

Had they been normal boys, Chat and Bud would have taken the warning to heart and been careful in the future not to overstep the rules of the game.

But being what they were, Mr. Phillips's re-

buke only inflamed their anger and made them the more stubbornly determined that no one was going to dictate to them.

"We'll show that coach where he gets off," mumbled Chat to Bud, as Mr. Phillips turned his attention to other members of the team.

The points already scored looked as big as a house to the regulars, and it was with confidence that they lined up for the second quarter.

As it proved, those points would have been sufficient for a victory. For the scrubs, who had played a pretty fair game in the first quarter, gradually but steadily lost ground.

They had been somewhat demoralized by Garry's play and were continually looking for some new tricks. Garry was quick to recognize this, and perplexed them by resorting to ordinary straight play.

Then, too, the scrubs were further demoralized by the fact that two members of the team were playing dirty football. The others were trying faithfully to observe the rules of the game. Johnson remonstrated warmly with Chat and Bud, but to no effect. They kept on slugging and holding whenever they thought they could get get away with it.

This spoiled the chances of their team. Whenever the scrubs had the ball and there was a good chance to advance, Chat and Bud

were almost sure to engage in some trickery that brought a penalty to their mates.

Once when the scrubs, driven ably down the field by the strategy of Tom Johnson at quarter, had penetrated the territory of the regulars and had come for the first time within striking distance of their opponents' goal, their hopes were blasted by Chat's tactics.

The backfield was doing good work, was beginning to work better with the linesmen, and Tom had a gleam of hope that his team might yet score and be saved the ignominy of a whitewash. Then in the next play Chat blocked Carl Zukor and Ted, who were trying to get at the man with the ball, by the novel method of putting an arm about the neck of each and pulling them to the ground on top of him.

The team was penalized fifteen of its hard-won yards. Gone was Johnson's hope of a goal. Gone was any remaining spark of enthusiasm in the breasts of the second team.

The rest of the game was a rout. The scrubs played like automatons, while Garry's team rode over them roughshod, piling up score after score until the tally reached a ridiculous point. When the whistle blew for the end of the game the score was 44 to 0 in favor of the regulars.

After they had had their shower in the gymnasium and changed into their street clothes,

Mr. Phillips called the members of both teams together.

"You boys have done well to-day," he said, addressing the regulars. "So have you," he added, turning towards the discomfited scrubs. "You fought hard, but you had no chance. And you know as well as I do why you had no chance. You, Johns, and you, Warding, are no longer members of the team!"

CHAPTER XIII

Sending the Challenge

Chat Johns' face flushed a brick red, and he started to protest.

"No use, Johns," interrupted Mr. Phillips, holding up his hand. "I am not acting hastily. I would be the last to do you or Warding an injustice. If you had forgotten yourself once, or perhaps twice, I might have passed it over and attributed it merely to excitement. But your acts were deliberate and repeated. I warned you, and even your own team mates remonstrated with you; but you kept on bull-headedly. I saw you slug and give the knee and hold in the line again and again. I would have taken you out, but I wanted to see how well the first team could stand the gaff, for they may have to come up against dirty playing again. But they won't have to stand any more from you. On Monday I'll pick out a new center and guard for the scrubs. That's all for to-day."

Chat and Bud flung themselves out of the place in a rage, and if looks could have killed,

Garry and some of his mates would have dropped dead on the spot.

When Monday came two other players were selected from the leftovers. Pudge Graham was moved up to center—a change approved by both teams—and George Reid was put in Pudge's former position of left guard.

For the empty right guard position Mr. Phillips selected a stocky, popular boy by the name of Leonard Riggs.

"Now maybe we'll be able to put up a real game fight against you chesty first string guys," exulted Tom Johnson, when these changes had been made. "There won't be any more 44 to 0 scores. You can bet on that."

There were not. During the days of practice that followed, the scrub team, under the able leadership of Tom Johnson, crowded hard on the heels of Garry's eleven and made them earn every goal they got.

There were few more penalties for broken rules, now that the trouble-makers were gone, and a bond of friendly rivalry existed between the two teams.

The regulars, under the spur of competition, were beginning to gain real strength. The first raw blunders were not repeated, their team work improved, and the punting of their backfield was so good, the running of Rooster and Nick so fast, that they began to consider the

sending of a challenge to Cherry Street School.

"Go ahead," Mr. Phillips advised, when the boys laid the matter before him. "I don't say that Cherry Street won't whip you. They have some old experienced players, while you boys are raw and new. But at the worst all you can get is a licking, and you may get some mighty valuable experience thrown in. You can't expect to do everything in a day. Send in your challenge and see what they say about it."

So, late one afternoon when practice was over, the "gang" gathered at Garry's house to compose the proposed challenge.

This was by no means so easy a task as it had at first appeared to be. No two of the boys could agree on the exact wording that should be used.

"Cherry Street Eleven," began Nick formally. "With the help of Mr. Phillips we have got together a Hill Street team—"

"Never! Too highbrow," pronounced Sloppy Hume, with a wave of his pudgy hand. "We have to find something those roughnecks will understand."

It was Garry, who, after an hour of solemn and sometimes heated discussion, suggested the challenge, endorsed by the rest, that should be sent to their rivals.

"Cherry Street Eleven," the short note began. "We're ready for you. Come out and get licked."

"Members of Hill Street Eleven."

Under this each boy joyfully scrawled his name.

"That ought to get 'em," Ted chortled. "They'll be ashamed not to fight us after a challenge like that."

But on this point it seemed as though Ted were mistaken.

As the days went by and no answer came to the challenge the boys began to wonder, then to fume.

Was it possible that the Cherry Street bunch intended to let the gauntlet lie without taking it up?

Then one day Si Rowe and Sizz Snider encountered some members of the Cherry Street eleven on the street. Afterward the details of this encounter were faithfully described to a group of Hill Street players on the home field.

"They said they wouldn't play us guys," said Sizz, so mad that he stuttered. "Said we couldn't even give them good practice. What do you think of that? So much beneath 'em they couldn't even see us."

"If it hadn't been that there were seven of

them to two of us we'd have pitched into them," growled Si. "The nerve of the poor fish!"

It was not long before the challenge and the manner in which it had been received and ignored became a topic of conversation in the town of Lenox, especially among those who were sportively inclined.

Thus it happened that Bradley Maddern, father of Peter Maddern, quarterback and captain of the Cherry Street eleven, met several of the older residents of Lenox in one of the leading drug stores.

"How's this about Pete's eleven refusing to play Hill Street, Brad?" one of them asked.

A slight frown puckered the forehead of Bradley Maddern.

"Why, I've tried to talk to Pete about it," he said frankly. "It seems to me that they ought to accept any challenge that's sent them, especially when it comes from a home town team. But you know how cocky these youngsters are. Pete says that the game would be a joke. Those Hill Street boys have hardly had time to learn the rules yet, he says, and they shouldn't have sent a challenge until they're pretty sure they can back it up."

"Reckon they are kind of sure," said the man who had spoken first, "or they wouldn't have sent the challenge."

"I hear Phillips, who starred on the Amherst eleven, is coaching them," spoke up another of the group. "He must have approved the challenge, and it stands to reason he wouldn't have done that if he thought his lads had no chance."

"That's as may be, and I personally agree with you," said Mr. Maddern. "But Pete isn't the only boy on the team, you know, and from all I hear the other boys feel as strongly about it as he does. You can scarcely force a team to play against its will, you know."

"I wonder if your Pete and the other boys know what the town's beginning to say about 'em?" said the first speaker, still with his air of gentle guile. "I wonder if they know the town's saying they're just plumb scared to fight the lads from Hill Street."

Mr. Maddern stared at the speaker.

"What?" he cried.

The old fellow with the gentle drawl nodded, while others in the group began to grin delightedly.

"Yes, sir! I've heard tell the Hill Street boys have the makings of a winning team, and that the Cherry Street fellows are shaking in their boots."

Mr. Maddern stared for a moment longer. Then a slow smile overspread his face. He

seized the hand of the speaker and shook it heartily.

"Thanks," he said. "Thanks for the tip. Just wait till I tell Pete that. Just-wait-till-I-tell-Pete-that!" and without another word Bradley Maddern turned on his heel and left the store, forgetting what he had gone in there to buy.

The conversation was not long in bearing fruit.

The day after the meeting of Mr. Maddern and the group of Lenox residents in the drug store a note was handed to Garry as he stepped from the gymnasium out on the field.

The messenger was one of the younger lads from the Cherry Street School, and he tried to curl his lip in scorn as he delivered it. But beneath the genial influence of Garry's smile the scornful twist melted into a grin.

"It's from Pete Maddern," called Garry to the members of the two teams, who came crowding up.

"Gee, what is it, Garry?"

"Open it quick!"

"Get a move on, old boy. Are you paralyzed?"

These and other observations from the impatient boys bombarded Garry as he tore open the envelope.

That message was brief but very much to the point:

"Got your challenge. Will meet you any time or place you set."

"Pete Maddern."

"Smoked 'em out at last!" cried Bill Sherwood hilariously, throwing his cap in the air.

"They've had to come off their perch," chortled Ted.

"Found out high-hatting us didn't pay," exulted Nick.

The joy of the Hill Street boys was soon followed by a feverish sort of preliminary stage fright. The die was cast, and they had to make good. They had been granted their wish and were to play the redoubtable team from Cherry Street. And they were as nervous about it as a prima donna at her first-night performance.

After consulting with Mr. Phillips, the boys set the date for the encounter for the Saturday three weeks distant.

"That will give us time to whip the team into better shape and get used to the idea of fighting a more or less veteran eleven," declared the coach. "We've got to work hard now, and any one lying down on his job is going to lose it."

Now that the Cherry Street game was a fixture, the Hill Street boys sent another challenge to the team of the Webster Street School. This time the gauntlet was thrown down a little more respectfully than in the case of Cherry Street, for Webster Street ranked much higher in prestige than any school in town.

No answer came for several days, and then one afternoon Garry chanced to meet Tom Allison, captain of the Webster Street team, near the post-office.

"I wonder if there's anything the matter with the mails," remarked Garry with a grin.

"What do you mean?" asked Tom.

"Oh, nothing much," replied Garry. "But our fellows sent your team a challenge a few days ago, and as we haven't heard from you, I thought the letter might have miscarried."

"Oh, that!" said Tom, flushing a little beneath Garry's quizzical look. "Yes, we got that. But, you see, we have a pretty full schedule, and--and—"

"Yes, go ahead," grinned Garry, amused at Tom's evident embarrassment.

"Well, it's this way," explained Tom. "You fellows are a new team, never played a real game yet, and—"

"You think we'd be too easy," interrupted Garry.

"I wouldn't put it that way," returned Tom. "But I'll tell you what we'll do. If you lick Cherry Street—or even if you put up a good fight against her—we'll give you a game."

"That's a go, is it?" asked Garry eagerly.

"Sure as shooting," replied Tom, and they shook hands on it.

It never rains but it pours, for on the day after the conversation with Tom Allison a challenge came to the Hill Street eleven from the school at Collingwood, four miles away.

"We'll meet 'em," said Garry, after a little talk with the coach and an hour of excited discussion by the members of his team. "It will be mighty good practice for us, and when we do meet Cherry Street we'll be able to give a better account of ourselves."

"We'll meet 'em and beat 'em!" cried Nick confidently.

"I'm not so sure of that," demurred Garry cautiously. "I've heard they are a husky bunch. But they'll sure know they've been in a fight!"

CHAPTER XIV

A Setback

Garry struck while the iron was hot, and on the same day sent an answer to Collingwood School, accepting the challenge and proposing the following Saturday for the game.

"That gives us two big games in two weeks," commented Ted. "Say, fellows, we'll have to go some to keep up the pace."

"Righto," agreed Garry. "There's no loafing on this job."

The Hill Street boys did work, worked like beavers.

About this time it became a standard saying in the Grayson home that Garry lived, breathed, and ate only for football. This was not quite true, for he did not neglect his lessons. But as far as any other sport was concerned it was thrown in the discard.

"He's no good to anybody," Ella complained one day, when she had vainly attempted to get her brother to go for a country hike with her. "He used to be good for something once in a while, but these days I don't think he even hears what I say to him."

"Then don't say it." Garry thrust his head in the door long enough to grin at his twin and withdrew it immediately. "What's the use of wasting breath?"

"You see," said Ella, turning to her smiling mother. "What can you do with a boy like that?"

The interval between the challenge and the date set for the Collingwood game passed quickly—all too quickly for the Hill Street boys.

On Friday night they went to bed early and tried to sleep, only to toss and turn, doze off, and wake with a start from dreams in which Collingwood made goal after goal while her rivals stood by, unable to interpose anything but the feeblest defense.

That they were to have a dry field to work on was evidenced by the dazzling sun that ushered in the dawn of the eventful Saturday.

Garry stole down the back stairs that morning and had breakfast in the kitchen with his mother. He had no wish to listen to Ella's teasing, good-natured though it might be, and his mother had joined him in a harmless conspiracy to avoid as much friction as possible on this important day.

The game with Collingwood had been talked about considerably in Lenox. More than ordinary interest was displayed in it because of the

rivalry between the Hill Street team and the haughty Cherry Street eleven.

"Gee, from what I hear from our fellows, it looks as though our whole school were going over to see the game. If we don't want to get mobbed before we get to Collingwood, I guess we'd better make an early start," advised Nick, as he danced nervously about like a race horse straining at the post.

"Wonder if any of the Cherry Street fellows will be over to see us lick Collingwood," remarked Ted, with a grin.

"We're not important enough," replied Garry, who was still ruffled at the treatment of his team by the Cherry Street boys. "Besides, they have a game on with the Grantville eleven. They won't be hanging around us to-day."

Mr. Phillips had planned to herd his boys into Collingwood some time before the game was scheduled to take place, so that some of the strangeness might wear off while they were getting acquainted with the place and the field.

There was a trolley line connecting the two towns, and it was by this route that most of the Lenox fans planned to reach the scene of the encounter.

But the players, both regulars and scrubs, were to be transported in automobiles owned by the parents of the boys.

Mr. Hume, the proud father of Sloppy, donated the family limousine for the occasion. Ted's father let his boy have his eight-cylinder, driven by the family chauffeur, and Carl Zukor and Con Riley brought up the rear with two flivvers.

A crowd had gathered to watch the departure of the boys and cheer them on their way. There was a hearty shout as the cars moved off, crammed to the running boards with husky lads.

There were only two among the crowd assembled whose faces did not express sympathy with the departing warriors. They were Chat Johns and Bud Warding.

"Hope they get licked!" growled the latter, as he turned away with a surly face.

"Oh, they'll get licked all right," put in Chat. "I'd go to Collingwood to watch the slaughter, only that bunch ain't worth the trouble."

"You go to the Hill Street School, don't you?" asked a bystander who had heard the last remark.

"Yes," growled Johns. "What of it?"

"There's this much of it: You ought to get your hide well tanned for talking that way about the team from your own school," was the retort.

"Oh, go sit on a tack," snarled Chat. Then seeing the contemptuous looks on the faces of

several, he slunk away into the crowd with his crony.

The boys found the Collingwood field a good one. The ground was smooth and level and the yard lines had been freshly marked. The visitors liked the Collingwood boys, too, though their first look at them was a dismaying one.

The home team was much larger and heavier, as a rule, than the Hill Street eleven. Many of them were the sons of farmers and had muscles developed by hard work. Several of them were veterans, having played on the team the preceding year.

Their confidence in themselves was shown by the rather slighting way in which they looked their visitors over, though they tried to disguise this and were friendly and cordial.

"We'll show 'em!" declared Garry, as he drew his fellows aside just before the start of the game. "We'll pile right into those big guys. Chances are they'll never know what hit them."

"That's the spirit," said Mr. Phillips, as he joined them. "Remember that a fast, brainy, smaller boy is often better than a big, slow one. Match your grit and speed against their superior weight and tear right into them."

"Dree jeers und a diger for Mr. Phillips!" called out Carl Zukor, who always reverted to his German accent when he was excited.

There was a general laugh, but the cheers were given just the same.

The time had come to take the field, and the boys threw off their sweaters and ran across the field to line up.

From their bench at the side of the field the scrubs looked wistfully after them.

"Say, what would I give to be in their shoes!" murmured Frank Nolan.

"Watch and wait," counseled Dub Tracy. "You never can tell when your time may come."

The toss fell to Collingwood.

They elected to kick off. Fuller, the left halfback, sent the ball rocketing down the field for a thirty-yard gain.

Nick was after it like a streak of lightning, caught it deftly and ran back for eight yards before he was downed.

A roar came from the Collingwood supporters. A net gain of twenty-two yards was not to be sneezed at.

Hill Street now was on the offensive. Garry glanced at his boys as they lined up, and saw that their faces were grim and determined. They were on the enemy's grounds and against a heavier team, but they were going to fight.

Just because his opponents were looking for the usual mass play on the first down, Garry decided to cross them.

The ball was snapped back and Garry threw it to Rooster, who clutched it and darted to the right for an end play. But the Collingwood tacklers were on the job and brought him down after he had made five yards.

Second down, five yards to go!

On the next play, Garry tried to send Dick through the line, with Si and Bill opening up a hole for him. That trio had usually been able to get through the scrubs for several yards.

But Garry found that the Collingwood team was very different from the raw scrubs at home. The visitors not only failed to gain, but were thrown back for a loss of three yards.

"Third down, eight yards to go," Garry muttered to himself. "We'll try another run, and if that doesn't go, we'll have to kick."

This time he gave the ball to Nick, and that nimble individual, by desperate bucking, carried it for the needed eight yards and three to spare.

For a first time a cheer rose from the Lenox fans.

Garry heard the jubilant shout, and his heart leaped. His team would show them some football yet!

But the time had not come for too much confidence, as was proved by the next play.

This time Garry gave the ball to Dick Ran-

dolph. Con Riley at end jumped to welcome the ball from Dick, but either through miscalculation or nervousness failed to get it.

"Fumble!"

The cry rose from the stands, an exultant cry from the Collingwood rooters and a dismayed one from the Lenox supporters.

Both teams were scrambling wildly for possession of the precious ball. When the referee unscrambled the players a Collingwood boy rose to his feet, both arms wound tightly about the pigskin.

The ball was Collingwood's on Hill Street's twenty-yard line.

The visitors gritted their teeth and put up a plucky defense. Nevertheless, on the first down Collingwood advanced six yards on a mass play.

Deep gloom descended on the Lenox fans. It seemed as if their team were definitely outclassed.

Fuller, the Collingwoods' left half, took the ball around the end for a run.

Ted lunged for the runner, threw his arms about his legs and brought him heavily to earth. Like an eel, Fuller wriggled free, regained his feet, dodged two other Hill Street tacklers, and scuttled across the field for a touchdown.

As they kicked goal for the added point the

referee's whistle blew for the end of the first quarter.

Seven to none in favor of Collingwood!

Gloom settled more definitely upon the Lenox rooters. Collingwood fans chortled and gibed and jeered, confident of success.

In the interval between periods Mr. Phillips encouraged his team.

"It's your first real game and you haven't found yourselves yet," he told them. "That's nothing to be surprised at, and the thing for you fellows to do now is to work out of your slump and make it snappy. I expect to see a rally now that will knock some of the conceit out of the Collingwood boys."

But he was not destined to see that rally in the next quarter or in the third.

The Hill Street boys, lighter and less experienced than the Collingwood players, could not withstand the onslaught of their massed line.

The Collingwood players, quick to detect this, pounded away ruthlessly at their enemy's weak point.

But the defense of the Hill Street boys was grim and desperate, and they kept Collingwood down to a field goal in the second period.

The third quarter was still more disastrous for the visitors, for the Collingwood hammering of the line kept up without cessation. The Hill Street boys were compelled to allow their

enemies two touchdowns. Adding two points for kicked goals, this made the score a disheartening one of 24 to 0.

In the interval before the last quarter Mr. Phillips did his utmost to cheer and encourage his boys. But in his heart he was afraid they were doomed to overwhelming defeat. Not that this would mean much, except in its general effect on the morale of the players. It would be too much to expect them to win the first real game they had ever played. Still, it was bad to have the first defeat so decisive.

But if the coach figured that the Hill Street boys were "through," he soon had occasion to revise his opinion.

The fourth quarter had hardly opened before it was evident that the visitors had taken a brace.

Garry Grayson was fighting mad and was beginning to play football.

Mr. Phillips saw him dive for a Collingwood runner, bigger and heavier than himself, and bring him to the ground in his headlong rush.

Probably the Collingwood players were becoming over-confident. Unprepared for this vicious attack, the home team player found himself flung to earth while the pigskin was jolted from his grasp. In a flash Garry had darted over his prostrate enemy in pursuit of the ball.

He was not the only one that went for that ball, but when the referee pulled nine boys off his back it was Garry who had the ball and who rose to his feet triumphantly, holding on to it for dear life.

After that Garry played like one inspired. He kept the Lenox fans on their feet and howling. Fired by his example, his teammates worked as they had not worked since the start of the game.

Garry drove them down the field with savage rushes and Con Riley retrieved his former error by a splendid run of twenty-five yards.

At last that magnificent rally brought them within twenty yards of the Collingwood goal.

The home team, beginning to get worried, prepared for a stern defense.

Garry decided to try the same play that had worked so well against the scrubs. It might not work, for by this time he knew the enemy he had to deal with, but he concluded that it was worth trying.

Garry received the ball from Bill, made a feint of throwing it to Rooster at full, turned quickly, and with Sloppy, Bill and Dick acting as his interfe ence, dodged out and around the end for the enemy's goal.

The Collingwoods were caught off their guard. By the time they realized who had the

ball Garry was half way to the goal, with most of the home team at his back.

Fuller flung out his arms toward Garry, but Sloppy and Dick brought him crashing to the earth with a well timed double shoulder block.

Bill warded off a vicious tackle, even as he himself was flung to one side by a Collingwood guard. The latter tackled Garry about the knees, and the runner came to earth, but with the pigskin stretched at arm's length between his straining hands just over the enemy's goal line.

"Touchdown!" cried the referee, and the Lenox crowd went mad.

Panting but happy, Garry brought the ball back and Nick kicked the goal.

But though they kept the ball in the foes' territory and were always threatening, Hill Street could not score again, and the whistle that ended the game found the visitors on the short end of a score of 24 to 7.

Back in the locker room beneath the showers, scouring some of the grime from their sore and aching bodies, the boys were disconsolate, despite the fact that Mr. Phillips was enthusiastic over what he said was a rally worthy of a college team.

"In that last quarter you were just beginning to get in your stride," he told them.

"That's the way you're going to play all the time from now on."

Some time later, when the boys were leaving the field and most of the crowd had dispersed, they saw a car that was familiar to them.

"19,888," Garry read the number. "That's Sandy Podder's car. So he turned out for the game, did he?"

"Yes, and he'll have our licking spread all over town before we get there," muttered Ted.

They were abreast of the car before they discovered Sandy himself slouched over the wheel.

He grinned tauntingly as his eyes fell on the boys.

"I've been waiting to give you the joyful news," he said mockingly. "The returns from Grantville just came in. Cherry Street licked Grantville 22 to 0. You boobs have a fine chance to beat Cherry Street—I don't think!"

CHAPTER XV

The Gypsy Rider

On the morning after the disastrous ending of the Collingwood game, Garry had a rather doleful expression on his face when he came down to breakfast. Ella was quick to notice his depression and comment on it.

"Garry thought he had the best team in town and one that was never going to lose a game, didn't he?" cried the irrepressible girl.

"It isn't the only game of the season," said Garry, as he turned to his grape fruit, "and the next one is going to be mighty different, let me tell you."

"Of course it is," said Mrs. Grayson soothingly, at the same time sending a reproving glance in the direction of Ella. "We all expect to have a very different showing from your team the next time it plays, Garry."

"At that, this game was not so bad. All you boys need is practice," put in Garry's father, glancing at his son over the top of the newspaper. "It's the same in football as it is in every other game. It's practice that counts."

"Well, we expect to get that all right," declared Garry. He pushed back his grape fruit and looked to his mother for the bacon and eggs that were to follow. "One thing you can say for our fellows, they're not afraid of hard work."

"It's good you can say one thing for them," remarked Ella, as she helped herself to a golden island of egg from the platter.

"Now listen, Ella," Garry tackled his egg as vigorously as though it had been a member of an opposing team. "You can knock our team all you want to! But I'm telling you that there'll come a time when you'll wish you hadn't knocked it so hard."

"When you meet the Cherry Street school, for instance?" asked Ella demurlly.

"Leave him alone, Ella." Mr. Grayson put down his paper and went at his breakfast in earnest. "Can't you see Garry's sore enough without your rubbing vinegar into the wounds? Better luck, Garry, next time. Pass me the salt, will you?"

"Do you know what we need, Dad?" asked Garry, when the family were again at the breakfast table on Monday morning. "We need a regular tackling dummy."

"You mean one of those stuffed things with a weight attached?" Mr. Grayson asked.

Garry nodded.

"We need lots of practice in tackling," he asserted.

"You can make those tackling dummies, can't you?" asked Mrs. Grayson. "I read once that you could fill a sack with straw or feathers or rags, or anything you happened to have handy—"

"Oh, yes, I know, Mother," Garry broke in eagerly. "But the kind you buy in the sporting goods stores has it all over the homemade varieties—"

"He's never happy unless he's spending dad's money," came in an undertone from Ella as she helped herself to another roll. "Wait till he has to spend his own."

"How about your spending mother's cash?" Garry retorted. "How about that new fur collar and those new ties, and—"

"Humph!" was all Ella could answer to this.

"Say, Dad, what about it?" Garry continued.

Mr. Grayson smiled and looked at his watch

"I'll think it over, son. Just now I have to hurry. And so have you," with a glance at his son's still half-filled plate. "Don't let your thoughts of football interfere with your school work and make you late. It doesn't pay."

Garry was not late for school, though he had to gulp the rest of his breakfast and take

the last block on the run. During the morning he tried to observe his father's injunction and keep his mind on his lessons. It was hard to do so, though, and most of the time the tackling dummy held a prominent place in his thoughts.

He found most of the members of the team feeling gloomy and depressed. At noontime they met to discuss the tragedy of Saturday's game, for there had been no general meeting on Sunday.

"We've got to snap out of it and get some good hard practice," grumbled Bill.

"If we don't," added Ted, "we are sure going to get it in the neck when we meet the Cherry Streets."

"I think it was as much stage fright as anything," offered Nick. "We weren't used to doing our stuff before a crowd. Next time we won't mind so much."

"Next time we'll win," asserted Garry, and the boys felt cheered by his words, even though they were not as sure as they would have liked to be that they were a true prophecy.

That afternoon after school Rooster drew Garry aside and asked him if he would go with him on an errand.

"Why, sure," agreed Garry, "although I expected to get in some practice. Is it very important?"

"Yes, it is, Garry." Rooster kicked a stone

off the sidewalk and looked embarrassed. "I'd have gone alone, but I just felt that I'd like to have a pal along. I'll tell you about it on the way."

Garry saw that Rooster was a little worked up about something, and he was anxious to help him in any way that he could. They stopped at Garry's home just long enough to let the latter drop his school books and then they went on.

"I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way," laughed Garry. "You'll have to take the lead, Rooster."

"I suppose you're wondering what it's all about," said Rooster, still with his embarrassed air. "I wouldn't want to tell it to everybody, Garry, but I know you're not the kind of fellow that goes around shooting his head off. It's about dad's trouble with Mr. Podder."

Garry was all interest in a moment.

"About the money you were speaking of that day in the barn, the money Mr. Podder never received?" he asked.

"The money Mr. Podder *says* he never received," answered Rooster, and there was resentment in his tone.

"You mean that Mr. Podder did get the money your father sent him and only says he didn't?" inquired Garry.

"I don't know what I think," replied Rooster, with a long face. "I don't think dad knows what to think, either. All he knows is that there is something funny about the transaction and he wants to find out what it is."

The boys trudged along the dusty road for some minutes in silence. Then Garry glanced at Rooster.

"But what has all this got to do with our tramp to-day?" he asked. "You forgot to tell me that."

"So I did," admitted Rooster. "Well, you know there's a gypsy camp about a couple of miles out of town."

"I know," nodded Garry. "Ella was saying something about going out there to have her fortune read by one of these gypsies that want to have their palms crossed with a quarter or fifty cents before they'll tell you anything. Mother said she couldn't, and sis had a fit of the sulks."

Garry grinned as he remembered.

"Well," said Rooster, "there's a man in that gypsy camp I want to see."

"I'm glad it's a man," gibed Garry. "I thought that perhaps you wanted your fortune told by one of the gypsy women."

Rooster made a pass at him, but went on soberly enough:

"They call him Rudolph, the horseman."

"Who?" asked Garry.

"The gypsy I'm going to see," Rooster explained patiently.

"I guess I must be dumb, but I don't get the idea," and Garry frowned. "What has this Rudolph, the horseman, to do with your father?"

"That's what I've got to find out," replied Rooster.

Rooster looked worried, and Garry felt sorry for him. Pretty tough luck, he thought, on a fellow wanting to help his dad out of a fix and not knowing just how to go about it. He thought of his own father, and knew just how Rooster must be feeling.

"I wonder why your dad sent you to see this gypsy instead of going himself," Garry ventured.

"Well, in the first place dad had an appointment in another town and couldn't go," explained Rooster. "Then he knows that this Rudolph has a sort of weakness for kids, and dad thought I might be able to get around him and find out what he knows without making him suspicious. You know these gypsies. They're leery of pretty nearly every one outside their own little tribe— Hello, look at that colt, Garry. Gee, Garry, there's a peach for you!"

Garry was not sure at first whether Rooster

referred to the colt or the rider, for the girl seated on the back of a sleek black colt was extremely pretty.

A side glance at his chum, however, showed his eyes glued on the horse. Garry grinned.

"Pretty fine," he agreed.

At that moment a big touring car turned the bend in the road and tore down toward them. The girl on the colt was directly in the path of the onrushing monster.

"Look out!" yelled Garry. "Go to the side."

The girl cast a frightened look to the rear and backed her mount to its haunches at the side of the road as the great car bore down upon them.

When the reckless driver was almost under the nose of the snorting colt, he blew his horn with a horrible squawk. Then with a grin at the frightened, plunging animal, he stepped on the accelerator and was gone in a cloud of dust down the road.

CHAPTER XVI

Stopping a Runaway

"Say, Garry, that was a dirty trick—"

Garry's grip on his chum's arm checked his speech.

"That colt is going to run away!" yelled Garry. "Quick, Rooster!"

The young horse was rearing and snorting, dancing from one side of the road to the other, eyes rolling, nostrils red.

The girl, sawing at the bit, managed to keep her seat only because of wonderful horsemanship.

But the colt had been too thoroughly frightened to respond either to the voice or rein of its rider. In another moment it would be beyond her control, and then the girl would be as helpless as a bit of paper blown about by the wind.

Swift as thought, Garry sprang for the young horse's bit.

The terrified animal reared high, shaking its head savagely to throw off Garry's grip. For a moment the world seemed to Garry an

awful tangle of iron-shod hoofs, of rolling eyes, and flying mane. In its rage the colt seemed about to fling itself over backward, bearing its rider and Garry to maiming or death.

Still the boy hung on desperately, using all his weight and strength to drag the animal back to the ground.

For seconds that yet seemed an eternity the young horse balanced between heaven and earth. Then earth won, and its pawing fore-feet struck the dust of the road.

Instantly Rooster sprang for the bit on the other side, and between them the boys held the frantic animal.

The pretty girl bent forward and rumpled the mane of the frightened creature with a gentle, caressing hand.

"Black Velvet must not hurt Nita, no," said the girl, in a voice that reminded Garry of the cooing of a dove. "Do not tremble so, bad one. No one will hurt you. Is it not so?" she asked, including the boys in a flash of her white teeth.

The lads smiled back at her.

"Guess it's safe to let go of him now," said Garry, as he released the bit. "Black Velvet!" he added, as he stroked the glossy coat. "That's a good name for him, all right. He's a mighty fine animal."

"You said it," Rooster agreed. "Wouldn't mind having him for myself."

The girl beamed at this admiration of her favorite. Then her face became grave, as she looked from one to the other of the boys.

"I think you save my life," she said, in her pretty foreign accent. "My uncle—he is Rudolph, the horseman—"

Rooster started and looked at the girl with a new interest.

"He will be much oblige to you," finished the girl. "And Nita is also," she added, with another flash of her white teeth.

"Oh, that's all right," said Garry, as Rooster, embarrassed, turned away and scuffed with his toe in the dirt of the road. "Glad we happened along at just the right time."

The handsome colt had quieted down now, and the girl drew him further to the side of the road. Now she gestured with one small brown hand toward a group of gypsy tents showing through the trees at the left.

"You will come with me there, yes?" she asked. "You will come to my people so that they may thank you, yes?"

The boys would very willingly have dispensed with the thanks, but since they were bound for the gypsy camp anyway, they did not see how they could refuse the girl's request.

"Sure we'll go," replied Rooster, as the

girl still watched them with her bright eager eyes.

"This way, then," said Nita.

With a quick gesture she whirled Black Velvet about and started at a slow canter down the road. Every now and then she would stop and draw rein, glancing back at them to make sure that they were following her.

"Gee, Garry, did you see who was in that car?" Rooster asked, as they walked along.

Garry shook his head.

"Guess I was looking too hard at the horse and the girl," he admitted.

"The boy in that car was Sandy Podder."

Garry stared at his chum.

"How could you tell? The car was going so fast—"

"Oh, I saw him all right. No mistake about it. I got a good look at his face just as he blew the horn."

Garry whistled.

"I must say the thing sounds like Sandy," he said. "You don't—" He paused and looked at Rooster, then went on quickly: "You don't suppose he blew that horn on purpose, Rooster?"

"I'd believe anything of that fellow," said Rooster, with a glum frown. "Didn't you see him look back and grin just after he let out

that blast? Surest thing you know, he blew that horn to scare the horse."

Garry whistled again and looked thoughtful.

"He might have made that girl lose her life," he said, nodding at Nita, as she paused again to smile and beckon to them.

"Much he'd have cared," Rooster snorted. "He's yellow all through. Some day that boy's going to get a good licking, and I only wish I were big enough to give it to him."

"Why do me out of a good time?" protested Garry.

At a turn of the road they came upon the gypsy camp. The huddled tents were so numerous as to surprise Garry.

"Must be a pretty big camp," he remarked.

"It is," Rooster replied. "A better class of gypsies, too, than you usually see. Rudolph, the horseman, is the leader of the bunch, and if this Nita is really his niece, maybe she can take us right to him."

Nita was waiting for them near the entrance to the camp, and as the boys reached her a swarm of gypsies came from the tents and surrounded them.

There were old men, bent of back and with gnarled hands and scanty hair. There were young men of swarthy complexion, fierce-eyed or sullen, old crones and young girls, many of the latter pretty.

These surrounded Nita and the two boys, pushing close to the girl on horseback, while, with pretty gestures, she told them of what had happened on the road.

"So you see these boys that they have save my life," she finished with a dramatic gesture toward the embarrassed Garry and Rooster. "I want you to like them and be nice to them for my sake."

It was then that Rooster thought that it was time for him to state his errand. As the friendly gypsies gathered round to thank him and Garry, he turned quickly to Nita.

"I wanted to see a man whom they call Rudolph, the horseman," he said.

"He is my uncle," returned Nita gravely. "It is too bad he is not here, for he would like to thank you too for what you have done for me."

"Not here?" Rooster's face fell. "Gee, that's tough luck. I sure did want to see him."

"When will your uncle be back?" asked Garry of Nita.

The other gypsies were standing around in a lounging circle, eyeing the boys curiously.

Nita shook her head.

"Not for a long time, many weeks, perhaps," she answered.

Rooster groaned.

"I might have known it!" he mourned. "Poor old dad never has any luck."

"It makes you sad?" Nita's black brows were drawn down in an anxious frown. "You want so much to see my uncle?"

"I sure did," sighed Rooster. "Never mind, Nita. You've done your best, and I'm much obliged to you. Come along, Garry, let's get back."

They had some difficulty getting away from the friendly gypsies, who seemed anxious to show them about the camp. One old crone even offered to tell them their fortunes free and seemed much disappointed when they declined her proffer.

Nita rode with them to the turn of the road and from that point waved to them until they were out of sight.

"Nice kid," commented Garry.

"Yes," agreed Rooster. "And if Rudolph had been there I'd probably have found out everything dad wanted to know. The old boy would have been grateful to us and—oh, well, what's the use yelling about spilled milk?"

"None at all," said Garry. "Buck up, Rooster. Better luck next time!"

CHAPTER XVII

Strangely Missing

"What's this?" asked Garry, as he came down to breakfast one morning and noticed a large box in the hall.

"Open it and see," directed his father, with a twinkle in his eye.

In a few moments Garry had it open, and an exclamation of delight escaped him.

"A tackling dummy!" he cried. "Oh, Dad, you're a brick! I'd rather have that than a hundred dollars! And maybe the gang won't be tickled to death!"

"I'm glad you're pleased," returned his father. "I made up my mind that you and the other Hill Street boys were going to have every chance to develop a winning team. I'm getting almost as interested in seeing you whip the other schools as you are yourself."

"You bet we'll do it too, Dad," declared Garry. "Something like this is just what we want, for our boys are none too strong on tackling."

There was plenty of space on the Grayson

grounds, and Garry, with the help of his friends, rigged up the dummy on an open place where they had room to make their run for it. Beneath it they dug a hole, which they filled with sand and sawdust, so that when they came to earth after a ferocious tackle they would sustain no injury.

"Now just imagine that this is one of the Cherry Street players, and dive for it beneath the knees," Garry counseled his mates. "Go at it with all your might as though your lives depended on it. Gee, I wish we had had this before the game with Collingwood. There wouldn't have been any 24 to 7 score, or if there had, it would have been the other way round."

Ella Grayson and Jane Danter sometimes came out to watch and giggle and pass teasing comments on the play. The boys were not so reluctant to admit this audience of two as they generally pretended to be. For both Jane and Ella were pretty girls, and though they teased the boys unmercifully, they were sometimes as funny as they were caustic in their comments. And the involuntary gasps that sometimes escaped them at a particularly fierce tackle were music to the boys' ears, who attributed them, and rightly, as tributes to their prowess. It made them strut a little and throw out their chests.

Meanwhile, although most of the Hill Street boys were squarely behind their team and rooting loyally for it, there were a few who were lukewarm since the disastrous Collingwood game, and two, at least, who were openly hostile.

"Here comes the winning team," Bud Warding would jeer, when the players appeared on the practice field. "Going to wipe up the ground with Collingwood, they were! What a joke!"

"And now they're going to put it all over Cherry Street," Chat Johns would add maliciously. "That's a bigger joke."

"Just a lot of hams," Bud summed it up.

Although the two bullies were exceedingly unpopular among the decent element of the school, they found a few kindred spirits who joined them in deriding their own school team.

If the players had not been so busy in preparations for the big games, it is quite possible that they might have dealt with the two bullies as they deserved.

As it was, they decided to ignore the taunts of their enemies for the time and go about their own business. But it was hard to restrain their indignation.

"Gee!" exclaimed Ted Dillingham, his hair-trigger temper causing his face to become almost as red as his hair. "I'd give my whole

postage stamp collection to get one swipe at those guys." As Ted was a fiend for postage stamps, this meant much.

"We'll wait till after the big games, anyway," growled Nick. "Then maybe we'll have something to hand those bozos that they won't like and that they'll remember for a good long while."

"The tackling dummy has helped your play immensely, and in other respects you boys are going great guns," Ella reluctantly admitted.

Indeed, the defeat at Collingwood had been a blessing in disguise. It had dispelled overconfidence and made the boys realize that they must fight like tigers if they hoped to win in the strenuous game of football.

One thing, however, worried them a good deal. Rooster, usually so dependable, was getting erratic. He got his signals mixed and at times played like an automaton. On one occasion he permitted the scrubs to make a touchdown on a play that could easily have been blocked if he had been in his usual form.

His team mates grumbled at this, but if there was one among them who thought he knew the reason of Rooster's slump, that one was Garry.

After the game in which the scrubs had scored Garry drew his fullback aside.

"Sorry, Garry," said Rooster uncomfortably, seeing what was coming. "I know I made

an awful guy of myself. But, gee, I've got so much on my mind!"

"You mean your father's trouble with Mr. Podder?" Garry interrupted.

Rooster nodded, and Garry laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm awfully sorry for you, old boy, and I'll do anything for you I can," he said. "But wouldn't it be a good idea to leave your trouble on the side lines when we start to play? We've got to win that Cherry Street game, you know. When you pulled that bonehead stunt a while ago—" Garry hesitated, then went on quickly, looking steadily at his chum—"I saw Mr. Phillips looking at Red Trainor of the scrubs. I thought I could guess what was in his mind. Can't you?"

The shot went home, and Rooster reddened. In his position of fullback for the second team Trainor had been working well, and any one with half an eye could see that he was going to try to crowd Rooster out of the first string lineup if he could.

Rooster straightened and returned Garry's steady look.

"Thanks for the tip, Garry," he said. "I'll try to do what you say and leave all my troubles on the side lines. After this I'll play ball."

"Attaboy!" Garry looked relieved. "We don't want Red Trainor, Rooster, though I'll

admit he's good. We want you. Now go to it."

After that, though Rooster's play returned to its former high level, Garry thought a good deal about Mr. Long's financial troubles. He wished that they might have found Rudolph, the horseman, instead of his niece, Nita, on the day they journeyed to the gypsy camp. Everything might have been settled for Mr. Long by this time, and poor Rooster would have had a heavy weight lifted from his mind.

The week passed all too quickly in study and practice, bringing the fateful Saturday close with alarming rapidity.

It happened that this was examination week at school, and as Mr. Phillips had declared that no boy could play on the team who did not pass his examinations, and pass well, there was feverish study as well as feverish practice.

When Friday afternoon saw the last examination papers passed in without any casualties for the members of the team, the boys breathed a sigh of relief. At last they might concentrate, think of nothing but the game the next day.

Mr. Phillips allowed them but little practice on Friday afternoon.

"I don't want you to go stale," he told the boys. "You have been practicing hard all week, and now's the time for you to forget all

about football till about this time to-morrow. Go to bed early, and whatever you do don't worry."

When the boys opened their eyes on the great day they found to their disgust that it was raining.

"Nobody'll turn out to see the game," said Garry at breakfast. "And how we're going to do any running with the mud ankle deep I can't see!"

However, about eleven o'clock the rain stopped and the tardy sun looked out. They would still have to play on a wet and sloppy field, but at least the sun served to make things more cheerful and would bring out the crowd.

The Hill Street boys reached the field early. One thing in their favor was that they were to play on their own school grounds.

They were in their uniforms and ready for the field before they noted that some of their members were missing.

"Where are Con Riley and Dick Randolph—" began Ted.

"And Carl Zukor," finished Bill Sherwood. "It isn't like those fellows to be late at a big game like this."

Garry looked about uneasily.

"It isn't quite time to start yet," he said. "They may be here any minute now."

But as time passed and the three missing

players failed to show up, Garry became really worried and took his trouble to Mr. Phillips.

"I've been looking for them," the latter admitted. He took out his watch and regarded it with an anxious expression. "If they are not here in five minutes, we'll have to use substitutes," he added.

"But, Mr. Phillips, the lineup will be a bust without Con and Carl in it," Garry protested. "And we can't possibly replace Dick at left half."

"Trainor will go in there, if necessary," returned Mr. Phillips in a voice that betrayed his anxiety. "At any rate, we'll have to go on with the game. The Cherry Street boys are ready for the field right now."

Garry said nothing further. But in his heart was the conviction that if the missing players failed to appear Hill Street would have lost its chance for victory over its rival.

They were lining up with Connelly and Jim Bradley substituting for Con and Carl and Red Trainor taking Dick's place at left half when there was a stir at the gate and the missing players came in, panting.

There was a ripple of surprise as Mr. Phillips and the opposing coach consulted and the teams dispersed to the side lines to await the change of the newcomers into their uniforms.

The three boys charged into the club house

gymnasium and reappeared in their football togs in an incredibly short time.

"How come?" asked Garry, as the panting boys approached him. "What's the big idea of holding up the game?"

It was then that he noted that the boys bore marks of a recent scrimmage—not a gridiron scrimmage, either. Con's lip was cut, and a thin stream of blood still trickled from it. Carl had a swollen eye that looked as though it needed the close application of a piece of beefsteak, and Dick limped slightly and showed a barked set of knuckles.

The faces of all three boys were grim and drawn, and they looked fighting mad.

"It wasn't our fault," said Dick, with a scowl. "We were held up. Tell you all about it later, Garry."

Garry thought he saw light, and his own face became set.

"All right, fellows," he cried. "We've got our team together, anyway. Come on. Play ball. And remember one thing! We've got to win. Not we *want* to win. We've *got* to win!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Up and At Them

The return of the missing regulars put fresh heart into the Hill Street boys.

Those who guessed with Garry that Bud Warding and Chat Johns had some connection with the battle-marked appearance of the lads who had come late on the scene became as fighting mad as the victims themselves, and hotly determined to win this game against Cherry Street, if it were the last thing they did on this earth.

An outburst of cheers greeted the young gridiron warriors as they took their places on the field. There were as many partisans there of Cherry Street as there were of Hill Street. Many of the girls of the two schools also lent a glow of color to the stands, and a great many men of the town, who had been stirred up by the rivalry between the schools, watched the game with interest. A large number of automobiles were parked about the field, and altogether the crowd was large and tumultuous enough to inspire both teams to do their best.

As they lined up against each other, Garry looked over his opponents. They were husky enough to promise a hot fight, but he noted with satisfaction that they had not so much weight as the Collingwood boys. But several, he noticed, handled themselves with the ease and sureness of old campaigners.

Garry had rather fancied that he would play a cagey, defensive game for a while until he had become somewhat accustomed to his rival's tactics. Now, however, he suddenly changed his plans and determined on a crashing offensive throughout the game, keeping his boys on their toes from start to finish.

Hill Street won the toss and Garry elected to kick off. Dick was chosen for that purpose, and did well with a thirty-five yard punt. Arnold caught it and ran it back for five yards before he was downed by Ted in a smashing tackle.

A roar came up from the Hill Street rooters in the stands at the cleverness and power of the play. Ted had put into it all he had, and it was plenty.

Cherry Street had the ball on their thirty-yard line, and they at once began a vigorous offensive.

They made the necessary ten yards on the first four downs with something to spare. Encouraged by this they kept on bucking the line,

but Hill Street braced and the ball went to them on downs.

Dick plunged like a bull through a hole made between left guard and tackle for a gain of four yards. Rooster gained two more between tackle and end. On the next try Hill Street was thrown back for a yard. With five yards to go on the fourth down, Nick kicked, but the kick was neatly blocked and the ball passed into the enemy's possession.

The next ten minutes saw dingdong, seesaw football. Now one team had the pigskin, then the other. Most of the time it was in the middle of the field, and the quarter would have ended with it still there, had it not been for a dazzling run by Ellis, the Cherry Street fullback, who was only brought to earth when he was seven yards from the Hill Street goal. There was no time to try mass plays, and Arnold kicked a goal from the field just before the whistle blew for the end of the first quarter.

Score 3 to 0 in favor of Cherry Street!

Between periods Mr. Phillips was busily engaged in metaphorically slapping his charges on the back.

"Great work, boys," he said. "Keep it up and we'll have those fellows running before they know it. That run of Ellis's was a bit of hard luck, but we'll balance that before the game's over. But your fighting spirit is every

bit as good as theirs and they haven't anything on you in any department of the game. Now," as the whistle blew for the beginning of the second quarter, "go out after them. Eat 'em up!"

In spite of their coach's enthusiasm, those three points loomed large to the Hill Street boys. They had acquired a wholesome respect for the enemy's driving power, and they knew that if they overcame that lead they would have to work harder than they had ever worked in their lives before.

Just before they started Garry had a word to say to his boys.

"The main strength of their lineup is in the two guards and the center," he said. "What we want is to fight those three fellows for all we're worth. We can match the rest."

The boys took the tip, and by concentrating their offense materially slowed up the rival team.

But here the superior condition and experience of the Cherry Street team began to tell. Some of the boys had played the year before, and all had been practicing for two weeks before Garry had organized his team, and two weeks mean a lot in the short football season. Their team work was smoother and more polished, their response to the signals quicker and more nearly automatic.

The lines surged back and forth, each side putting forth its utmost endeavors, but gradually, inch by inch, foot by foot, the Hill Street boys were forced back toward their goal.

Furiously they fought, while the stands were in a tumult at the fierceness of the play. But the cries of the Hill Street rooters were mostly imbued with hope, while those of the Cherry Street partisans were full of confidence. In their minds there was no doubt of the outcome.

"Brace, fellows!" growled Garry, as his team was forced back to the twenty-yard line. "Use all the stuff you've got. We mustn't let them cross the goal."

The defense tightened up, fought valiantly, bringing the boy with the ball to earth time and again when it seemed that a touchdown was inevitable.

On the third down Sloppy Hume and Bill Sherwood tackled the ball carrier so strenuously that they not only stopped his progress but forced him back several yards, while the Hill Street rooters made the air clamorous with their shouts. Not for nothing had the Hill Street boys been using their tackling dummy!

But Pete Maddern again resorted to the kicking game, and though Nick made a tremendous leap into the air in an effort to block the ball it just grazed the tips of his fingers

and sailed over the bar between the goal posts. The quarter ended with the Hill Street boys on the short end of a 6 to 0 score.

"We'll never make that up," groaned Rooster. "A lead like that and the game half over!"

"Plenty of time yet," replied Mr. Phillips. "Snap out of it, Long, and make up your mind you're going to win. No game was ever won by whining."

Rooster flushed and started to speak. He checked himself in time, but when the team took the field for the beginning of the third quarter there was one member of it, at least, mad enough to chew nails.

After five minutes of that quarter the Hill Street boys began to climb. To the surprise of the crowd, the major part of which believed that the game was already won, Garry started a line of play that was baffling, yet brought results.

With Cherry Street on its own forty-yard line and the ball in Hill Street's possession, Garry looked round at Rooster as though to make sure that he was in position. He repeated this action twice more before he made his play.

"For the love of Pete, Garry, stop looking at Rooster," whispered Sloppy fiercely "Don't you see that you're giving the tip to

Cherry Street as to just what you're going to do?"

"Am I?" asked Garry innocently.

The visitors had indeed caught on, and were already moving to intercept Rooster when he should get the ball.

The ball was snapped back by Bill. Garry turned like a flash and threw the ball to Nick, and Nick, finding almost an open field before him, carried the ball a full twenty yards before he was tackled.

The stands roared their appreciation, and the Hill Street boys grinned at their bewildered rivals.

The next time Garry looked hard and long at Nick.

"He's going to try the same trick again," Pete Maddern warned his cohorts in a low voice. "He'll pretend to throw to Danter, but that will be a fake. Look out for some one else."

But Garry this time actually threw to Nick, who dodged, squirmed, and wriggled through the line until he had made eleven yards.

By this time the Cherry Street boys were "standing on their heads." Garry's stare might mean something, might mean nothing. Only Garry knew.

Hill Street was now within nine yards of the enemy's goal. The crowd was wild with

excitement, yelling encouragement to their favorites.

Cherry Street braced for a desperate defense of their threatened line. Hill Street tensed with a mad determination to get over that line.

"Nine yards to go!" muttered Garry. "Nine yards to go!"

CHAPTER XIX

Snatching Victory from Defeat

"Are you with me, boys?" Garry cried, as he looked at the earnest faces of his linesmen. "Do we score right here?"

"Sure ding!" growled Carl Zukor.

"You bet we do!" declared Sloppy, rubbing the sweat from his eyes.

"Give me the ball," begged Nick, "and I'll get through or break every one of my ribs in trying."

Garry took him at his word, and on the next play passed the ball to Nick. Carl and Sloppy made a hole for him between right guard and tackle and Nick went through. He broke no ribs, but he made four yards before he was downed.

Second down and five yards to go! The crowd was yelling like so many maniacs.

"Brace, boys! Brace!" Pete Maddern urged his players.

At this call they did brace to such effect that Rooster, who carried the ball, went down

under a pile of bodies with the scant gain of a yard.

Dick Randolph had the next chance, and as the opposing linesmen rushed at him he dived over their crouching forms for a gain of three yards.

Fourth down and one yard to go!

Dick was as good a line bucker as any one on the team, and the natural thing to expect and what Cherry Street did expect was that he would be chosen to make that extra yard. For that reason Garry decided to do something else.

Bill snapped the ball back to him. Garry gave his signals and made a quick move as though to pass the ball to Rooster. But instead he plunged himself head foremost into the Cherry Street line between left guard and center.

There was a desperate mixup, but when the pile of bodies was disentangled Garry was over the line with a foot to spare.

A wild yell went up from the Hill Street rooters, and this swelled into still greater volume a moment later when Nick kicked the goal.

Seven to six in favor of Hill Street!

For the rest of the quarter the ball was kept in the Cherry Street territory, and the period ended without any additional scoring by either side.

There was wild jubilation among the panting Hill Street boys.

Mr. Phillips was almost as excited and exultant as his charges. But he warned them against over-confidence.

"A game's never won till the end of the last quarter," he reminded them. "Those fellows aren't easy to beat. They're apt to stage a big come-back, and that's when you want to look out."

Before starting in again, Garry had a word for his mates.

"A trick is good when it isn't tried too often," he said. "Pete Maddern is on now to my looking at a fellow as though I were going to throw to him and then passing it to some one else. So we'll cross him by playing straight football for a while. I may play the trick once more after a while. Now, fellows, this last fifteen minutes will tell the story. All we need is good team work, and we'll have those Cherry Street bozos yelling for mercy."

But the Cherry Street boys were not yet ready to ask for mercy, as was shown by the terrific rush with which they opened the last quarter.

A fierce tackle by Briggs and Hopkins caused Sizz Snider to fumble, and Hopkins rose from the mêlée with the ball clutched tightly in his arms.

A roar rose from the Cherry Street supporters. They had seen that sort of tackling before, and it meant that Pete Maddern and his boys were on the rampage.

With the ball in their possession, Cherry Street broke through their rival's line of defense again and again. Battering at what they regarded as Hill Street's weakest point, between Si Rowe and Sizz Snider, they fought their way down the field until they were within twenty yards of Hill Street's goal.

Filled with rage at the fumble that had handed the ball to Cherry Street, Garry fought madly to inspire his team to a more rigid defense.

The boys responded gallantly, and for a time Cherry Street's headlong rush was checked. Three downs netted them only a four-yard gain.

Baffled by the stiffened defense and doubtful whether his team could make the required six yards on the fourth down, Pete Maddern tried for a field goal, and the ball sailed neatly over the bar between the posts.

The tables had been turned with startling suddenness. Now it was Cherry Street's turn to howl. The score was 9 to 7 in their favor. They need not try to score again in the few minutes remaining. All they had to do was to keep Hill Street from scoring and the game was theirs.

So surely theirs, thought some of the spectators, that they turned to walk away, considering the game practically over.

But Hill Street was not through—not yet!

Frantic yells from the crowd caused those who were walking off to turn toward the field again.

A magnificent flying tackle on the part of Bill Sherwood had shaken the ball from the hand of a too-confident Cherry Street runner.

Instantly Bill fell on the pigskin, protecting it with his arms and as much of his body as he could wrap around it. Nothing short of an earthquake could have dislodged that ball.

"Bully for you, Bill!" screamed Garry. "That was one time when we got the break!"

The ball was now in Hill Street's possession, and Garry tried a play more complicated than he had yet attempted.

Bill snapped the ball back to Garry. The latter pretended to pass the ball to Dick, then turned and shot the ball to Nick. Nick in turn threw to Ted, who was on his toes to receive it.

Ted was off like a flash, with his interference doing clever work in front and on either side.

A Cherry Street tackler dodged one of the interferers and dashed toward Ted with hands outstretched. The lad saw him coming, made a feint of dodging him, then, as the other hesi-

tated and half turned, Ted gathered his muscles for a supreme effort and leaped clear to one side of the crouching tackler.

But before Ted could regain his balance another tackler loomed before him, caught him about the legs and threw him heavily on Cherry Street's thirty-yard line.

"Great work, Ted!" called Garry, as amid the yells of the Hill Street rooters the teams lined up.

Now there were only three minutes of playing time left. Mass plays against the hard defense the Cherry Street boys were sure to put up would probably take too long. They might get nearer the enemy's goal. But it would do no good if they did not cross that goal. And it was a little too far to attempt a kick, which, if it failed, would give the ball to Cherry Street.

Garry set his lips in a determined line.

"Now or never!" he muttered to himself.

The ball was snapped to him. He made as though he would throw to Dick. Then, as the enemy's line swayed in that direction, Garry, holding the ball, was off toward the right end with Sloppy and Bill acting as interference in front and Nick and Dick close behind.

Down the field Garry went like a deer, running as if for his life. Bill downed a tackler on one side, Sloppy on the other.

While the sidelines rocked with the stamping and cheers of the Hill Street fans, Garry straight-armed a tackler in his way, writhed out of the near embrace of another, flung himself head-on into a third, bowling him over, and with a last desperate effort flung himself over the goal line for the touchdown that spelled victory.

Nick failed to kick the goal, but nobody cared. An instant later the whistle blew for the end of the game. Hill Street had conquered by a score of 13 to 9!

The crowds rushed across the field, a yelling mob.

Garry, covered with mud and grime, was hoisted on the shoulders of his hero-worshipping schoolmates and borne in triumph down the field to an improvised chorus:

"Garry Grayson! Garry Grayson!
Yea, yea, yea!
Garry Grayson! Garry Grayson!
Saved the day!
Yea, Garry! Yea, Garry! Yea, *Garry!*"

CHAPTER XX

Trapping the Traitors

Garry, flushed and happy, got free from his well-wishers at last and rejoined his companions. On the way he met Pete Maddern, who was grouping his boys together.

Pete was sad but game, and he forced a smile as he held out his hand to Garry.

"Put her there, Garry," he said. "You fellows played a splendid game and won fairly."

"It was nip and tuck," replied Garry, as he grasped Pete's hand. "Luck was with us."

"Call it pluck and I'll agree with you," said Pete generously.

He lined up his team, and they gave three cheers for the victors. Hill Street responded with three cheers for Cherry Street, and Carl threw in a "diger" for luck.

Mr. Phillips beamed his satisfaction as he went with his boys to the gymnasium.

"I'm proud of you, boys," he said. "You put up a fine game and beat boys who had far more practice and considerably more experi-

ence than yourselves. You beat them, not because you had more muscle, but because you mixed more brains with your work," and here the coach looked at Garry, who flushed. "I'm not going to pick out any special one for commendation. You all did well, and there's glory enough for all. I've got just one word of warning. Don't get chesty because you won. You've still got to play Webster Street, and they're a stronger team, I think, than the one you whipped to-day. We'll let up in practice for the next day or two, but after that we'll pitch right in and get in shape for the big battle."

The boys were sore and bruised from their strenuous exertions, but happy beyond words. They had wiped out the stigma of the Collingwood defeat and had whipped their Cherry Street rivals, who at first had been too proud to accept their challenge.

"Now for Webster Street!" exulted Ted. "If we lick them, we'll own the town."

"If!" returned Garry cautiously. "But that will be a pretty big contract. They're a strong team, and from now on they'll be practicing like a house afire. We'll have our work cut out for us when we meet them, and don't you forget it. I saw Hanson in the stands to-day sizing us up. He's their coach, you know, and about as good as they come. You

bet there wasn't anything happened to-day that he didn't see."

"Well, we'll have a chance to see Webster Street when they play Cherry two weeks from now," put in Nick. "Then we'll have as good a chance of getting on to their style of play as they had of doping out ours to-day."

"By the way," said Garry, turning to Dick, "what was it that made you and Carl and Con so late in getting on the field to-day?"

"Ask Chat Johns!" replied Dick, as he looked at his skinned knuckles. "Though he's lost one of his teeth and may not be able to talk very well," he added.

"I thought that sneak had something to do with it," replied Garry. "Tell us about it."

"We were coming up Maple Street," explained Dick, as his eager comrades clustered about him, "when we saw Tom Wilkes beckoning to us from the door of an old barn. We went up to him, and he asked us if we'd like to see a four-legged duck. Said he had one in the back of the barn. I never had much use for Wilkes, because I knew he was a pal of Chat Johns. Still he seemed friendly enough and we wanted to see the duck; so, like a bunch of boobs, we fell for it. We went to the back of the barn, and then we heard the click of a key in a padlock. We were locked in!"

A murmur of indignation rose from the boys.

"We rushed to the front of the barn, and pounded on the door," continued Dick. "We could hear snickering outside, and looked through a crack and saw Wilkes, Johns, Warding and Jim Westley laughing their heads off. Of course we tumbled at once. They were going to try to keep us there till after the game. They wanted Cherry Street to win!"

"The low-down sneaks!" exclaimed Ted. "And they all go to Hill Street School!"

"They ought to be tarred and feathered and ridden out of town on a rail!" growled Nick.

"They'll get theirs," prophesied Garry, white with anger. "Go ahead, Dick. What then?"

"We yelled at them and told them what we'd do to them, but they only laughed the harder," Dick went on. "Oh, they were having a lovely time. Then we tried to smash the door, but it was no go. There was only a little window in the back, too high for us to reach and too small for us to get through, even if we had reached it. I thought we were gone coons. Then Carl discovered that there was a loose board in the back of the barn down near the floor. We tugged away at that till we loosened it enough for us to crawl through one at a time. Then we stole round to the front, mad enough to lick an army. You should have seen the look on their faces when they saw us. We

sailed right into them, and what we did to them was a plenty. We smashed right and left. They were four to our three, but it wasn't two minutes before they were running up the street. Just look at their eyes and noses when you see them again. Then we came on to the game."

"Bully, boys!" exclaimed Garry. "That's handing it to them! And there's more coming to them yet."

"I don't think you'll see anything of them for a few days," put in the grinning Con. "You notice they weren't at the game. They're pretty well bunged up."

"And they'll be sorer still when they hear that we won," chuckled Ted. "Gee, what a miserable gang of traitors!"

If there was any exception to the general spirit of jubilation among the Hill Street boys over the victory, it was furnished by Rooster. He rejoiced with the others, but only in a half-hearted way. It was evident that something was pressing heavily on his mind.

"What's got into you, Rooster?" asked Garry, when he had a chance to speak with him alone.

"Oh, the same old thing," replied Rooster despondently.

"You mean that Podder matter?" queried Garry.

Rooster nodded.

"I'm sorry," said Garry. "I'd hoped your father had that matter all fixed up."

"Not by a jugful!" replied Rooster. "In fact, it's worse than ever. You'll see by tomorrow's paper that dad's been brought up in the police court."

Garry was shocked.

"Oh, I didn't know it was as bad as that!" he exclaimed. "How does that come?"

"Oh, dad got desperate at the way things were going," replied Rooster. "He felt that he was getting all tangled up in a net by Podder's crooked tactics. He met Podder and they had words, and dad lost his temper and threatened to knock Podder's head off, or something like that. Podder got scared—I guess he's about as yellow as Sandy—and summoned dad to the police court. Dad went there this morning and was bound over for six months to keep the peace."

"That's too bad," Garry said, in profound sympathy for his chum. "How about that gypsy? Has he got back? Couldn't he do something to help your father out?"

"I don't know whether he could, or if he would if he could," replied Rooster. "I've been out to the camp again and learned that Rudolph had got back, but that Mr. Podder had come to see him and they had gone away together. Dad thinks Podder will bribe him to

keep his mouth closed. The whole thing's a dreadful mix-up. Do you wonder that I'm sore?"

"No, I don't," replied Garry warmly. "I only wonder that you can play football at all with all that on your mind. I hope that everything will come out all right."

Garry got a royal welcome when he reached home after the game. His father slapped him on the back, his mother hugged him, and Ella forbore to tease and looked thoroughly proud.

Sunday gave the boys a much needed rest, and Mr. Phillips released them from practice on Monday and Tuesday. But after that, practice began again and the team worked hard for the forthcoming game with Webster Street. They had met one obstacle in Cherry Street and hurdled it. But they were under no delusions. The harder game was yet to come.

Several days went by and they had caught no sight of Chat Johns or of Bud Warding. The parents of those fellows had sent notes to school saying that their sons were ill. But Garry and his chums had a shrewd guess that the illness consisted of nothing worse than black eyes and bruised faces.

The enthusiasm of the team was such that the boys not only practiced in the afternoons after school, but frequently met on the field

near Garry's home for a little group practice after supper.

They had done this on Thursday night, and were just about to quit because it was getting too dark to see the ball when Ted detected Chat and Bud taking a short cut across one corner of the field.

"There go the traitors now!" he exclaimed.

Without prearranged signal the whole team swooped down and surrounded the bullies.

The latter turned to run, but strong arms grabbed them.

CHAPTER XXI

Hatching a Plot

Chat Johns and Bud Warding struggled violently to free themselves, but it was of no use. They were held in grips made strong by football practice and stronger still by indignation.

"What's all this about?" snarled Chat, as he ceased his futile efforts to free himself.

"You'll pay for this," growled Bud.

"I'll tell you what it's about," replied Garry. "You're a pair of dirty traitors. You did your best to have Cherry Street whip the team of your own school. You tried to trap Dick and Carl and Con in a barn, so that they couldn't get to the game in time."

"It was Tom Wilkes that did that," growled Chat.

"He did it because you put him up to it," retorted Garry. "You were there and tickled almost to death because you had them locked in. You had your laugh then. We're having our laugh now."

"What are you going to do?" asked Bud fearfully.

"We ought to hammer you good and plenty," put in Nick. "Even then you'd be getting off easy."

"Death to traitors!" said Ted in a sepulchral tone.

"You'd better be careful!" cried Chat. "You can be arrested if you hurt us."

"I don't think you'd care to tell in court why we hurt you," laughed Garry. "But we're not going to beat you up. Con and Carl and Dick did that pretty neatly the other day. Ted, go to my barn, will you, and get the can of paint you'll find on a shelf. It's yellow paint—just the kind we need for these yellow dogs."

Chat and Bud again made strenuous efforts to free themselves, but their captors held them tightly.

"A little more of that and we'll tie you to trees," warned Garry. "You'd better stand still and take what's coming to you, or you may have to stay tied here all night. Hand me that paint, Ted," he said to his chum, who had by this time returned.

He took the can and with a small brush that was in it wrote the word TRAITOR in glaring yellow letters on the foreheads of the bullies.

"Hold them for a few minutes till that dries a little," Garry directed his mates.

"Now, you fellows," he said, addressing Chat and Bud, "you've got a new name and one that just fits you. You'll have some job scrubbing that off. But even when you get it off we'll always see it there."

"You fellows will pay for this!" snarled Chat, who was almost blubbering.

"All right," returned Garry carelessly. "It's worth paying for. But remember, this isn't a circumstance to what you'll get if you try any more monkeying with the Hill Street football team."

The angry boys held their captives a few minutes longer, and then at Garry's signal turned them loose. Bud and Chat slunk off, muttering threats of what they would do in retaliation.

It was nearly a week before Chat Johns and Bud Warding ventured to return to school. The news of their adventure had preceded them, and they were met with contempt on all sides. The curious looks thrown at their foreheads drove the two boys wild with rage. The paint, of course, had disappeared, but, as Garry had said, the word TRAITOR could still be seen there in imagination. They were shunned and despised. No one would speak to them or have anything to do with them except a little coterie of their own stripe, fortunately few.

There was one kindred soul outside of their own school, however, who was in perfect sympathy with them and whose hostility to Garry and his team equaled that of Chat and Bud.

Sandy Podder had attended the game between Hill Street and Cherry Street, together with a number of other students from Lenox High. He had been an ardent rooter for Cherry Street, although he had not attended that school formerly. But he wanted to see them win in order to humiliate Garry and his chums.

All through the game he had hurled jeers at the Hill Street eleven. He had even collected a lot of gibes with which he had intended flaying Garry after Hill Street had lost the game. He had rehearsed them and rolled them as sweet morsels under his tongue.

His chagrin was great when he had seen Garry make that last touchdown that won the game. All those venomous jeers had been wasted! Mingled with his disappointment had been a feeling of alarm that gave him a sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach. For he had bet heavily that Webster Street would whip Hill Street when the two teams should meet. He was running with a fast crowd among whom betting and other vices were prevalent.

He had bet against Hill Street mostly on his

hostility, but partly on his judgment, and the general belief that Webster Street would win had made it hard to get bets unless he offered odds. He had done this to an extent that scared him now when he thought of it. He had put up nearly seventy-five dollars to win less than twenty-five. No actual money had passed, but the bets had been made, and he knew that if he lost he would have to pay or be disgraced among the crowd of his cronies. He knew, too, that his father would not pass by in silence the loss of any such sum as that.

This did not worry him much at first, for he had felt sure of winning. What chance did the raw eleven of Hill Street stand of beating the veteran team of Webster Street? The defeat of the former by Collingwood increased his elation. He was already figuring how he would spend his winnings.

Then had come the game with Cherry Street, and Sandy's heart went down into his shoes. How could he pay if he lost? He had already spent most of his allowance and was so far in debt to many stores of the town that he was constantly in fear lest his father should hear of it. Now if he lost nearly seventy-five dollars more! He did not dare think of it.

But as long as there was some dirty trick that might be played, Sandy was not altogether hopeless. He had heard of the branding of

Chat Johns and Bud Warding, which had spread through the town. He knew both of these boys slightly, and now he took pains to cultivate their acquaintance.

This was not difficult, for Chat and Bud were so generally ostracized that they grasped eagerly at the advances Sandy made to them. He took them riding in his car, gave them tickets to the movies, and they were soon as thick as thieves.

"Guess you don't think much of Garry Grayson and his crowd," remarked Sandy Podder casually, when he thought the time was ripe. The three boys were having soda at a corner table in the drug store at the time.

Both the bullies winced, for it was a sore subject and they usually steered clear of it.

"I'm just about as fond of that bunch as I am of a rattlesnake," replied Chat after a moment's pause, biting off his words viciously.

"Same here," growled Bud.

"I don't wonder," said Sandy sympathetically. "I heard of the raw deal they gave you fellows. It's a burning shame, I'll tell the world. But are you going to take it lying down?"

"I'm trying to figure out how to get even; but I haven't hit on any way to do it yet," replied Chat gloomily.

"Perhaps I can help you," remarked Sandy.

"I'm sore on that bunch myself, and I'd like to see some of the conceit taken out of them. What do you think would make them feel worse than anything else?"

"To get licked by Webster Street," put in Bud, after a moment's thought.

"My idea exactly!" agreed Sandy, looking around the drug store to see that no one was listening. "Come closer, fellows. I want to talk to you on the quiet."

CHAPTER XXII

Danger Ahead

The conference between the three was long and animated, with Sandy Podder doing most of the talking and Chat and Bud listening with evil smiles on their faces.

"How about it?" asked Sandy at last "Don't you think it's a good plan?"

"Sounds good to me," said Chat.

"It's a dandy!" said Bud emphatically. "And, barring accidents, it ought to work. But that Garry Grayson is a pretty slick article, and it's no cinch to put anything over on him."

"He'll fall for it all right," asserted Sandy confidently. "We all owe him something, and we can pay our debts all at one time. And don't forget—if it comes off there's a good bit of change in it for each one of you fellows."

In the meantime, Garry, all unconscious of the plot that was weaving about him, was hard at work getting his team up to fighting pitch for the game that was going to decide the grammar school championship of the town.

The victory over Cherry Street had put con-

fidence and enthusiasm into the Hill Street boys. There was no more danger of stage fright. They had learned their strength and, best of all, they had learned their weaknesses.

Mr. Phillips kept hammering away at them, and under his guidance the team was developing from a mass of raw recruits into a polished and well-oiled machine. The scrubs too were improving, and were giving the first string boys all they could do to handle them. But Garry never grumbled at that. Strong opposition was the very thing he wanted.

Though the boys worked hard, several bits of hard luck struck the team. Sizz Snider developed a case of mumps that threatened to keep him out of the Webster Street game altogether. Si Rowe emerged from a strenuous scrimmage with a badly sprained ankle that narrowly escaped being a fracture. Dick Randolph had an attack of tonsilitis, and the family doctor feared that an operation to remove the tonsils might become necessary.

This seriously weakened the team, and it became necessary to draft substitutes from the scrubs. Frank Nolan took Dick's place at left half, Red Trainor took Si's position at right guard, and Dub Tracy was placed at right tackle.

While these boys were good as individual players, it took some time to fit them into their

places in the team. They were unfamiliar with Garry's signals and the other boys' style of play, and the results were painfully evident in practice.

The uneasiness this occasioned was increased a little while later by the results of the game between Cherry Street and Webster Street. Garry and his mates had looked forward to this eagerly as an indication of the comparative strength of the teams.

Would Cherry Street win? If she did, the Hill Street boys would feel that they were on velvet. But if Webster Street won—well, that was something else. And if she won by a bigger score than Hill Street had, there would certainly be occasion for much anxious thought.

That anxiety was apparent on the faces of the Hill Street boys as they saw Webster Street outplay their Cherry Street rivals. The latter put up a desperate game, but they were clearly outclassed. They were outrun and outthought. Webster Street scored almost at will, and won the game by a score of 22 to 0.

"And we beat them by only 13 to 9," murmured Ted thoughtfully. "Some difference!"

"That doesn't mean anything in my young life," declared Garry stoutly. "Comparative scores are nix. I don't deny that Webster Street has a mighty good team. But I didn't see anything to-day to scare me stiff. It only

means that we's got to practice like the mischief."

As Garry and his chums were passing out of the gate they caught sight of Sandy, Chat and Bud, who were in a state of great hilarity.

"That was a real football game to-day," Sandy called to Garry tauntingly, as the latter passed the trio.

"So it was," replied Garry calmly.

"It'll be 44 to 0 when you chumps play Webster Street," continued Sandy.

"Maybe," replied Garry. "Though we don't expect to beat them as badly as that."

"Quite a wise cracker, ain't you?" sneered Sandy, his face flushing.

"Don't have to be to get the best of you," retorted Garry. "Swiped any more footballs lately?"

"Look here—" began Sandy fiercely.

"I'm looking," countered Garry, staring straight at Sandy. "But I don't see anything —much."

"Why don't you slam him one, Sandy?" interjected Chat, with a scowl.

"For the same reason you don't," replied Garry. "Because he knows he'd get as good as he sent. How's your forehead, Chat? Seems to me I see a bit of yellow there yet."

By this time the bullies were fairly wild with anger. Had Garry been alone, they would un-

doubtedly have assailed him. As it was, they contented themselves with scowls and shaking of fists that met only with an amused smile on the part of their object.

"Never mind," growled Bud, as Garry and his mates passed on. "He'll get what's coming to him and he'll get it with interest. Gee, how I hate that fellow!"

"You haven't anything on me when it comes to that," snapped Chat.

"I guess we all feel the same way," added Sandy. "That chesty kid ought to have his head knocked off."

But however jauntily Garry had carried off the altercation with the bullies, he was inwardly the prey of deep anxiety. Webster Street had proved itself stronger than he thought. By this time he knew good football when he saw it, and there was no doubt that Webster Street had put up a superior quality of play that afternoon.

Still he kept his nerve and courage up to fighting pitch. He refused to admit for a minute that Hill Street was to be defeated. There were still two weeks remaining before the game came off. A lot could be done in two weeks!

So he set himself desperately to the task before him, sparing himself as little as he spared his mates. Especial attention had to be given to the three newcomers, Trainor, Nolan, and

Tracy. Garry drilled them in the signals until Dub Tracy laughingly said that his brothers were complaining because he was talking numbers in his sleep.

Rooster Long was still depressed and unlike himself, the more so because the gypsy camp had moved and with it had gone his chance of seeing Rudolph, the horseman. The nomads had disappeared in the night without warning, and no one seemed to know where they had gone.

On the Thursday following the Webster-Cherry game, Garry had occasion to go on an errand for his father to Lansdale, a town about fifteen miles away. It was a roundabout way by rail, so Mr. Grayson put his car at Garry's disposal, to be driven by the family's man of all work.

Garry saw Rooster on the street and asked him to go along, an invitation that the boy accepted with alacrity.

They had gone about twelve miles when Garry caught sight of a group of tents among some trees a little off from the roadside.

"Gypsies, or I'll eat my hat!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXIII

A Gleam of Hope

The word "gypsies" acted on Rooster Long like an electric shock. He sat up in his seat with a jerk and looked eagerly in the direction indicated by Garry.

"Sure as shooting!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if it's the same bunch that was over near Lenox."

"It's a dollar to a plugged nickel that it is," replied Garry. "You don't usually find two camps so near together. Look, there's Nita!" he added, as he caught sight of the gypsy girl coming along at a gentle canter on Black Velvet.

That the girl recognized them, too, was evident by a quickening of her pace as she came up to the automobile, which the driver had stopped on a signal from Garry.

"You are the two brave boys who save my life," she said, with a pretty smile. "I glad to see you again. So is Black Velvet; is it not true, naughty one?" she said, as she caressed the horse.

"And we are glad to see you," replied Garry.

"Is your uncle back with you?" asked Rooster eagerly.

"Yes," answered Nita. "He got back two days ago. He is over there now," and she pointed toward the camp.

In a twinkling the two boys were out of the car.

"Will you take us to him?" asked Rooster.

"To be sure," agreed Nita readily. "He will be glad to see you and thank you for what you do for me. He said so when I tole him."

She dismounted from her horse, and leading him by the bridle, preceded the boys through the fringe of trees that partly hid the camp.

She led them directly to the most pretentious wagon of the outfit, on the steps of which a tall, bronzed gypsy with a hooked nose and eyes like a hawk's was sitting.

He rose to his feet as they approached and eyed the boys with a glance at once curious and forbidding.

"These are the brave boys I tole you about," said Nita, by way of introduction. "The ones that stopped Black Velvet when he be frightened and start to run."

The look of the gypsy changed at once. He showed all his white teeth in a flashing smile and shook hands warmly with both of the boys.

"You are brave," he said. "You are good. Nita has told me how you saved her life. I do not forget. I thank you much. I will give you money. I will give you a horse for each of you. No, Rudolph will never forget."

"We were glad to do it," replied Garry. "But we could not take money nor a horse, thank you just the same. But you can do something for my friend here. His name is Long. His father's name is Andrew Long. He deals in horses. You know him, don't you?"

The gypsy started at the name, but recovered himself immediately, and his face assumed a blank expression.

"Maybe I hear the name sometimes," he said vaguely.

"You surely know him," broke in Rooster impetuously. "You have sold horses to him and bought horses from him. He has spoken of you many times. And he has been trying to find you for a long time."

"What he want me for?" asked Rudolph.

"It's this way," explained Rooster, his words fairly tumbling over each other in his eagerness to help his father. "My father is having a lot of trouble with Mr. Podder. Father says he sent a lot of money to Mr. Podder, about three thousand dollars, in payment for some horses. He put the money in large bills in an envelope and gave it to Sandy Pod-

der to carry to his father. Mr. Podder says he never got the money. Sandy says my father never gave it to him. But my father says you were with him when he paid the money, and that you saw Sandy get the money. He says if you'll only come out and say so, my father won't have to pay the money over again."

Rooster paused to get his breath. Rudolph looked gloomily at him, but said nothing.

"Won't you do this?" pleaded Rooster. "I'm not asking you to do anything wrong. I'm only asking you to tell the truth. Surely you wouldn't want an honest man to be cheated out of three thousand dollars!"

"I do not want trouble," muttered Rudolph. "I do not want to go to court. The courts are not for gypsies. Mr. Podder buy many horses of me. Your father and him fight it out. I keep away from it."

"But don't you see," said Rooster, "that all Mr. Podder has to do is to say that he didn't get it, while my father has got to prove that he sent it? And you're the only one he can prove it by."

"Your father and him fight it out," repeated Rudolph obstinately.

Poor Rooster was almost in despair. Here Nita interposed.

"Uncle Rudolph," she said gently, laying her hand on his arm, "you love your Nita, is

it not so? And Nita might be lame or dead if these brave boys not stop Black Velvet. You will help them, yes?"

In the look that Rudolph bent on her the boys could see how dear she was to him. But he shook his head, though it could be seen that he was weakening.

"You would give money. You would give horses," cooed Nita, pressing her advantage. "You tole me you would do anything for these boys. And now they ask you just to tell the truth. Surely you will do this thing for Nita, for little Nita. Is it not so?"

It was hard to resist that pleading voice, harder still when that voice belonged to one's choicest treasure, and Rudolph succumbed, though reluctantly.

"You tell your father come and see me," he muttered, in a tone that told how much the concession cost him. "I will talk to him."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" cried Rooster, almost frantic with relief and delight. "I will telephone to him right away, and he will come out to see you. And thank you, too," he added, turning to Nita. "You don't know how much you've done for me."

"Not so much as you boys do for me," disclaimed Nita.

With a warm good-bye to both, the boys left

the gypsy camp, feeling as though they were treading on air. Rooster especially could hardly refrain from shouting.

"Talk about luck!" he jubilated, as the two boys climbed into the car, which immediately started on its way. "That's no name for it. Won't dad be tickled to death!"

"Luck for the team too," replied Garry, almost as exultant as Rooster himself. "Once get this thing off your mind, you'll be playing like a house afire."

The moment the automobile reached Lansdale Rooster sought a public telephone and got in touch with his father, who excitedly declared that he would be on his way to the gypsy camp in five minutes.

Garry had been right in saying that the lifting of the burden from Rooster's mind would redound to the good of the team, for from that time on the boy played like one possessed. And his comeback had its effect on his mates, inspiring them to new courage and endeavor.

So it was a very different team that represented Hill Street when the day came that preceded that of the big battle. The boys were trained up to the minute. What gave them additional confidence was the report from their scouts that Webster Street had rather let down in practice. Their victory over Cherry Street had imbued them with confidence, and they

looked forward to a comparatively easy triumph over Hill Street.

On the Saturday set for the game Garry had a telephone call a little before noon.

"It's Rooster," said a panting voice at the other end of the 'phone. "I'm in trouble, Garry. Could you meet me down at the old mill?"

"Sure thing," replied Garry. "I'll come a-runnin'."

"Now what on earth is the matter?" Garry asked himself, as he hung up the 'phone. "Can Rudolph have gone back on his word?"

The old mill stood at a rather lonely place on a side road, a half a mile out of town. Garry reached the place in a few minutes, breathless from having run part of the way.

A big touring car was standing at the side of the road, and Garry concluded that Rooster, perhaps with his father, was inside.

"Hello, Rooster," he panted, as he drew up abreast of it. "I told you I'd come. What—"

He stopped right there!

A bag was thrown over his head, and several pairs of hands held his arms down at his sides.

CHAPTER XXIV

In the Nick of Time

The crowd that gathered for the football game between Hill Street and Webster Street far excelled in numbers and enthusiasm any that had witnessed the other games between the three schools. The town had been worked up to a high pitch of interest by the rivalry between the teams. Then, too, this was the climactic game that would settle the grammar school championship of Lenox. It was held in the town baseball park, so that neither team would have the advantage of playing on home grounds.

The Hill Street boys were early on the field, indulging in group practice and kicking the ball around. All were there except Garry. Usually he was among the first on the field, and his absence created wonder that gradually deepened into uneasiness.

"Have any of you boys seen Grayson today?" asked Mr. Phillips, who had been fidgeting around for some time.

None of them had, and Mr. Phillips had

recourse to the telephone. When he returned from it he looked very much worried.

"Mrs. Grayson says that you called him up several hours ago," he said, addressing Rooster. "She thought he was with you."

"I?" exclaimed the astonished Rooster. "There must be some mistake. I didn't call him up."

"Then somebody must have called him up in your name!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, in deep bewilderment. "What can it mean?"

A feeling akin to panic swept through the Hill Street boys. Garry was the heart of the team, the director of every play. Without him, they were beaten before the game began. What could have happened to him?

When Garry felt the sack thrown over his head he fought like a tiger. But he was no match for the four pairs of arms that held him, all of them belonging to boys bigger than himself. Struggling desperately, he was forced into the tonneau of the machine, where a strong rope was wound about his arms, rendering him helpless.

"I guess that will hold him for a while," said a gloating voice, which he recognized as that of Sandy Podder.

"Fell for it like a blooming chump," came the voice of Chat Johns in reply.

"It was too easy!" exulted Bud Warding.

Through a slight tear in the sack Garry could see that the fourth member of the quartette was Tom Wilkes.

"You'll pay for this, you low-down cowards!" cried Garry, wild with anger.

"All right," returned Sandy. "Present your bill and try to collect it."

He climbed into the driver's seat and started the car off at a rapid pace.

Garry's heart was a wild tumult of emotions. He guessed at once the meaning of this kidnaping. They were going to keep him from the game! And Garry, without conceit, knew what that would mean. He was the pivot on which the team depended. He could not repress a groan.

"Don't like it, little sunshine?" chuckled Chat malevolently.

"You dirty traitor!" retorted Garry. "If my hands weren't tied, I'd mash you into pulp."

"Them be hard words," came from the grinning Bud. "Just when we're giving you a nice little ride into the country, too! There's gratitude for you."

"Of course I know what all this is about," said Garry, in biting scorn. "You traitors want to see Hill Street beaten just because you were put off the scrub team. What do you

think is going to happen to you when the fellows find it out?"

"This has got nothing to do with the game," growled Chat. "That will go on just the same. Do you think you're the whole works? They've got plenty just as good as you to take your place. We're doing this to get even with you for daubing us up with that yellow paint."

"Don't think for a minute that alibi will go," returned Garry. "The fellows will know well enough why you did it. You want to see Webster Street win. One reason is that you're just plain dirty traitors. And the other is that you want to help Sandy Podder win his bets. I've heard of the way he's been betting against our team. He's a good sport—not!"

"Shut your trap!" growled Sandy from the front seat. "If you don't I'll come back there and make you."

"Come along," retorted Garry. "My hands are tied and you'll never have a better chance."

They had spun along for about three miles when there was a loud explosion. The car stopped at once.

"Tire blew out!" exclaimed Sandy disgustedly. "Here, you fellows, help me put on the spare. Lively now."

They went to work with desperate haste, just as two riders, a man and a girl, appeared

at the bend of the road a little way ahead, coming toward them.

Through the tear in the sack Garry recognized Nita on Black Velvet, accompanied by her Uncle Rudolph. His heart gave a bound.

"Nita!" he cried, as the riders came toward the car. "Rudolph! Help! Help!"

The gypsies stopped, startled, and looked at the grotesque figure in the car.

"Nita!" cried Garry again. "These fellows are carrying me off! You know me. I'm one of the boys who stopped your horse from running away."

"Oh, uncle!" cried Nita. "He is that brave boy! I know his voice! Oh, uncle, help him!"

In a flash Rudolph was off his horse and had snatched the sack from Garry's head.

"Here, you, keep out of this!" growled Sandy, whose face was as pale as ashes.

The powerful gypsy looked at him contemptuously, lifted Garry from the car, and set him on his feet. He drew a knife from his belt and slashed the cords.

The bullies were panic-stricken. Not one of them dared to make a move toward the brawny gypsy, who could have broken them in two.

"Oh, I'm so glad we here!" exclaimed Nita, her face radiant.

Her uncle grinned and handed his whip to Garry. The latter took the hint. With a bound

he was upon Sandy and the whip curled around his back. Sandy howled with pain and started to run, but not before he received another lash, so hard that it might have broken the skin.

The other rascals suddenly remembered that they had an engagement elsewhere, but Garry was among them in a flash, his whip lashing right and left. They broke and ran like hares, their speed increased by the sight of other gypsies approaching.

Garry pursued them for a little distance, the whip still doing yeoman's service. Then he returned and handed the whip back to Rudolph with thanks that were none the less fervent because they came gaspingly. In a few words he explained what had brought him into that plight.

"You a long way from town," said Rudolph. "We go to Lenox. I take you there, yes? You climb up behind me."

So it was that about fifteen minutes before the time for the game to begin Garry dismounted from the gypsy's horse at the baseball park and darted through the gates, to receive the frantic and delighted greetings of his worried mates and equally worried coach.

While he was slipping into his uniform he gave them disjointedly the main points of his adventure, and it would have been a black day

for the cowardly plotters if they had come in sight that afternoon.

Their plot apparently had failed. Yet had it wholly failed? Garry, it is true, had escaped from the meshes that they had sought to weave about him. But the incident had not been wholly without its effect.

For the excitement of the morning had been a severe strain on Garry's nerves and strength. He had been thrown into a whirlpool of emotions at the very time it behooved him to be cool and calm. And the team's nerves had also been frayed by the worry and uncertainty caused by Garry's absence.

So that at the beginning of the game the whole Hill Street team was to a certain extent "up in the air." The smoothness and polish that they had acquired by the last weeks of practice were absent. They looked like anything but the team that had triumphed over Cherry Street.

The work in the line was poor. The forwards charged too high and were carried back and thrown right and left. The secondary defense was slow when it came to getting into the play and stopping the runner, who easily avoided their futile clutches. Interference was missing and the work of the backs lacked coordination. Rooster alone among the backs showed real class. Again and again he tore

through the line or skirted the ends for gains, but his efforts were largely wasted because of the mediocre showing of his mates.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" came from the Hill Street sections of the stands after Rooster had made a brilliant run of twenty-two yards.

But the cry died away when Red Trainor misread one of the signals that Garry had been dinning into him and got in the way of Dick, causing the latter to make a disastrous fumble. Allison, captain and quarterback of the Webster Street team, scooped up the ball on the run and brought it in a brilliant run to Hill Street's fifteen-yard line, where he was downed by Garry.

"Oh!" gasped Jane Danter. "Oh, dear, I thought he'd surely get over the line that time!"

"I knew he wouldn't as soon as I saw Garry going after him," declared Ella proudly.

With their goal threatened, Hill Street braced desperately. Merrithew of Webster got through for two yards on the first down. On the next attempt he was luckier and added five more. Then Allison took the ball and plunged through a hole between right guard and tackle for two more.

With only one yard more to go on the fourth down to keep the ball the stands were in a tumult.

"Make it, Webster!"

"You've got them going!"

"Mow 'em down!"

"Eat 'em up!"

These and similar cries came from the Webster Street rooters, accompanied by the deafening clangor of cowbells.

The Hill Street partisans were no less vociferous.

"Hold 'em, Hill Street!"

"Throw 'em back!"

"Brace, fellows, brace!"

Amid the yells of the boys rose the shriller treble of the girls, quite as much excited as their male schoolmates.

There was a furious mixup as Dabney, the Webster Street fullback, tore at the line with practically the whole strength of his team behind him. The battle was the hottest of the game that far, and for a moment the victory was in the balance. But when the referee untangled the squirming mass of bodies Dabney had not only made his yard, but with practically the whole Hill Street team on his back had wriggled his way over the line for a touchdown. He himself kicked the goal, and the quarter ended a moment later with the score 7 to 0 in favor of Webster Street.

At the beginning of the second quarter Hill Street received the kick-off and Rooster started

the cowbells and horns going in the stands with a five-yard rush. Nothing was gained on the next down, however, and on the third Nick was thrown back for two yards and Nolan punted. The punt was returned by Allison with a forty-five yard kick that Nick tried to catch on his five-yard line but missed, the ball slipping from his hands. He recovered it quickly, but had to kick hastily and the ball went only twenty yards. It was gobbled up by a Webster Street back on Hill Street's twenty-five yard line.

But Hill Street braced, and their opponents were not able to make the necessary ten yards in their four downs. Garry's boys were fighting desperately, and when they got the ball commenced a march down the field that renewed hope in the hearts of their rooters. But just when a touchdown seemed almost in their grasp an unlucky fumble by Ted gave Dabney, the Webster Street fullback, a chance to make a magnificent run of seventy-two yards through a broken field and land the ball behind his enemies' line for a touchdown. The goal was kicked and seven points were added to the Webster Street tally.

14 to 0, and the game half over!

CHAPTER XXV

Over the Line for Victory

The Webster Street fans were jubilant and the Hill Street supporters were correspondingly depressed as the team trotted into their respective quarters for the resting spell between periods.

To say that Garry and his team were not disgruntled would be untrue. But to say that they were despondent would be equally wide of the mark. On the contrary, they were fighting mad, and Mr. Phillips welcomed the signs he read in their flashing eyes and flushed faces.

"Plenty of time yet to win, boys," he encouraged them. "Who was that fellow who said: 'We've just begun to fight'? You've got the stuff in you to win. I can guess just what it was that's kept you back so far. You're upset because of those fellows who kidnaped Grayson. But don't you feel that that's just the reason you ought to win? Do you realize that those bullies will be jubilant if you get whipped? Are you going to give them that satisfaction? Not if you're the kind of boys I

think you are. Go in now and fight like tigers. Rip 'em up the back. You can do it, if you think you can. They haven't anything on you when you're at your best. Go in and win!"

The boys gave their coach a rousing cheer that was as good as a promise as they trotted out on the field.

Acton of the Websters kicked off and Frank Nolan caught the ball. A quick glance showed the Webster ends bearing down upon him, and he knew that he would not have time to run the ball back before he was tackled. So he raised his hand as a signal for a fair catch. But regardless of that, a burly end pitched into him and knocked him headlong. Time was called while he was recovering, and Webster was penalized for the play. When Frank was seen to be limping, time was called while Dick Randolph, who had recovered from his illness, was called out from the sidelines to take Frank's place.

The ball was Hill Street's on their forty-yard line. On the first down Nick plunged through right guard and tackle for four yards. Dick tried between tackle and end, but gained only a yard. Rooster plunged through a hole made by Bill and Sloppy, but the Webster line had braced and Rooster was thrown back for a loss of two yards.

With fourth down and seven yards to go,

Garry called on Rooster for a kick. Bixby, a Webster tackle, leaped into the air and blocked the kick, but could not hold the ball.

Garry scooped it up while running at full speed and raced down the field. So quick had been his motions that his enemies were taken completely by surprise. Dodging, squirming, twisting, straight-arming when necessary, Garry was through like a flash and threw himself across the line for a touchdown, just as Dabney made a desperate but futile lunge at him.

Nick kicked the goal, making seven points for Hill Street, while the team's supporters in the stand went into a delirium of delight.

"That's the way to do it!"

"Come on, Hill Street! Wipe up the gridiron with 'em!"

"Another like that and you'll tie the score!"

For the next five minutes the teams strained against each other, neither being able to make an appreciable gain. The Webster Street boys were playing now for time. They were in the lead, and if they could hold their opponents off the game was theirs.

But Hill Street had "tasted blood" and would not be denied. Slowly but steadily they pressed their opponents down the field. But try as they would they could not get beyond the thirty-yard line of their opponents, and

when Garry knew that they had only one minute left for play he called on Rooster for a kick.

The kick was beautifully timed and the ball soared into the air like a bird. But for a time it seemed to be of two minds about going between the posts. It came spiraling down lazily, tantalizingly, and Rooster afterward declared that he could feel his hair turning white while he waited until it at last decided to be good—from the Hill Street standpoint—and crossed the bar just inside the right-hand post.

A second later the whistle blew for the end of the third quarter with the score 14 to 10 in Webster Street's favor.

That was very different from 14 to 0, and the Hill Street boys were correspondingly elated. Webster Street was not having the walkover she expected.

"They fought for time in that quarter," jubilated Mr. Phillips. "In the next one they'll be fighting for their lives. You can beat them, boys. You're on the up grade. They're getting afraid of you. You've got to beat them, and I'll tell you why. I just saw Sandy Podder in the stands. He sneaked in like a whipped dog and is making himself as small as possible behind others. But he's there. Are you going to let him see Webster

Street beat you after what he did to Grayson? Are you?"

It was like a spark to powder. Gone was weariness, forgotten were bruises. To let Sandy Podder see them beaten! Not for a million dollars!

"Nod on your lifes!" yelled Carl Zukor.

So it came to pass that Webster Street thought a cyclone had struck them when Hill Street plunged into them for the first scrimmage of the fourth quarter. There was no standing against them. Time after time Hill Street made their ten yards or more on downs, and the ball was almost constantly in their possession. Then, just as a touchdown seemed inevitable, Tracy fumbled the ball, Dabney pounced upon it and ran with it thirty yards before he was downed.

Inspired by this lucky break in the game, the Webster Street boys fought like demons, while their rooters spurred them on with frantic adjurations. Now more than ever they were playing for time. They had abandoned all hope of a successful offensive. If they could only keep their goal line intact for six—five—four—three minutes more!

With only three minutes of playing time left Garry resorted to desperate measures. He resolved to try a crisscross forward pass. It was a play that he had worked over with Mr. Phil-

lips's help since the game with Cherry Street. It was risky, for it required perfect timing, and it had been agreed that it should be used only in an emergency.

The emergency had come!

Garry gave his signals, caught the ball that Bill snapped back at him, and threw to Dick at left half. Dick ran to the right and threw the ball to Nick, who in the meantime was running straight to the side, cutting in between end and tackle. Nick made a perfect catch, tucked the ball in his arm and legged it down the field.

The Webster line had swayed toward Dick, and before it realized who had the ball Nick had got a good start, with Ted and Rooster running on either side as interference. Dabney threw himself at Nick, but Ted disposed of him with a shoulder block. Nick straight-armed Wilson, dodged Ferris as the latter plunged, and kept on toward the goal, with all the Webster Street players after him like a pack of wolves.

Twenty yards from the goal—fifteen—ten! Nick was going like the wind. At the five-yard line, Acton lunged at him, but Garry gave him the roll-block, throwing his stiffened body through the air and hitting Acton's knees, bringing him to the ground just as Nick plunged over the line for a touchdown in the

last minute of play. Rooster kicked the goal; and a moment later the game ended.

Hill Street had won, won gamely, won gloriously, by a score of 17 to 14. The championship of the Lenox Grammar Schools was theirs!

Pandemonium reigned for a few minutes, as the Hill Street rooters swarmed over the field and surrounded their favorites, mauling and pounding them until the boys were glad to escape to the comparative quiet of the quarters. "Comparative," for even there the air resounded with effervescent babblings and shoutings as the boys called hilariously to each other, all so happy that they scarcely knew whether they were standing on their feet or on their heads.

As for Garry, he was in the seventh heaven of delight. It seemed to him that life had nothing else to offer so rapturous and exciting.

Mr. Phillips, too, was happy beyond words. And he had reason to be, for he had taken a raw team and in one season made it a champion.

"Three cheers for the best coach in Lenox!" called Garry, and the cheers were given with a will.

"Three groans for Sandy Podder, Chat Johns, Bud Warding and Tom Wilkes!" sang out Bill Sherwood, and the boys groaned so

agonizingly that some one suggested that they ought to call an ambulance.

Garry ruled the roost in the Grayson home that night. The rest of the family were temporarily in the background. Mr. Grayson looked on him proudly. Mrs. Grayson gazed at him fondly. Hannah, the maid, saw that he got the choicest tidbits. Ella bowed at the idol's shrine. She was bursting with pride in her brother, and gave him a hug that warmed his heart.

"Oh, I am so proud of you, Garry!" she said, as she kissed him.

The capsheaf of Garry's satisfaction came Monday afternoon, when Rooster dropped in shortly after supper. The boy's face was radiant, and Garry knew he had good news.

"Spill it," commanded Garry. "I can see you're crazy to get it off your chest."

"You said a mouthful!" exulted Rooster, as he dropped into a chair, after an impromptu jig on the living room rug. "Gee, this is a regular banana time! Everything comes in bunches. First, we lick Webster Street. Now dad's got even with the Podders."

"Tell me all about it," demanded Garry eagerly.

"Mr. Podder came up to the house with his lawyer and Sandy," chuckled Rooster. "Came up all standing, snappy as a crab, and said that

by jinks he was going to have a showdown. Well, he got it," and Rooster's smile grew broader.

"Dad, you see," he went on, "acted as though he were scared to death. Begged Mr. Podder not to be hard on him. Said he'd given the money to Sandy to give to his father. Podder said he didn't believe it. Sandy said that dad never gave him any money. Mr. Podder got on his high horse, thumped the table, said he'd attach dad's bank account. Then dad touched a bell and Rudolph and Nita came into the room."

"Gee, how I wish I'd been there!" broke in Garry.

"Sandy got as white as chalk," continued Rooster, "and Mr. Podder was flabbergasted. Dad asked the gypsy to tell his story. Rudolph insisted that he had seen dad put the money in an envelope and give it to Sandy for his father. The lawyer asked Rudolph a lot of questions, but the gypsy stuck to his story. Any one could see that the gypsy was telling the truth. Then the lawyer turned to Sandy, and that big cheese broke down. Admitted he'd got the money. Said he'd gone to a poolroom to shoot a couple of games with some cronies and hung up his coat, and when he went for the coat later the money was gone. He delivered the empty envelope later to his father, and

said that dad must have failed to put the money in it.

"Mr. Podder must have known that he was lying, but he didn't want to lose the money and saw a chance to bilk dad out of it by making him pay it over again. He gave the gypsy a lot of business, and thought that would make him keep quiet. Oh, those Podders are a precious pair! But it's all right now. Sandy's confession settled it."

"Bully!" cried Garry. "But I wonder who really got the money," he added thoughtfully.

"Search me," replied Rooster. "But who cares? Dad's got his receipt."

How the mystery of the missing money was solved will be related in our next volume, entitled: "Garry Grayson at Lenox High." There, too, we shall learn how the young football player entered Lenox's chief institution of learning with some of his old chums, how he had to work hard to get on the eleven, surmounting obstacles that at times seemed almost unconquerable.

"Look!" exclaimed Garry, as he glanced out of the window. "There's some of the bunch coming up the street. Bill, Dick, Ted and Nick. Come along."

Garry and Rooster grabbed their caps and were down the walk and out of the gate in a twinkling, where they met their mates and in-

dulged in an impromptu jubilation party. All were stiff and bruised from the strenuous game of the Saturday before, but full of hilarity and high spirits.

"Guess we all need a little limbering up," laughed Garry. "I'll go in and get my football and we'll have a little practice."

"You're a glutton for football, aren't you?" grinned Bill.

"Why shouldn't I be?" replied Garry. "It's the greatest game in the world!"

THE END

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